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THE GREAT INITIATES

ÉDOUARD SCHURÉ

Frontispiece

THE GREAT INITIATES

SKETCH OF THE SECRET HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

BY

ÉDOUARD SCHURÉ

TRANSLATED BY FRED ROTHWELL, B.A.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

RAMA—KRISHNA—HERMES—MOSES—ORPHEUS

"The Soul is the key of the Universe"

LONDON
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To the Memory of

Margherita Albana Mignaty

Without thee, great and beloved soul, this book had never seen the light of day. The mighty flame of thy love brooded over it; thy grief supplied the needed nourishment; divine was the hope wherewith thou hast blessed it. Thine was the Intelligence that beholds eternal Beauty and Truth, far transcending ephemeral realities: thine the Faith that removes mountains: thine the soul-awakening, the soul-creating Love, and thine the enthusiasm that burns as a glowing fire.

And now, the lamp of thy life has flickered out and thou art gone. Death has folded thee in his dark, soft pinions and borne thee away into the great Unknown. . . . Still, though mine eyes may no more see thee, I know well thou art more living than ever before! Set free from earthly bonds and dwelling in the all-pervading light of Heaven, thou hast throughout been with the work I have undertaken, and I have been conscious of thy faithful love keeping continual watch over its predestined birth.

Should any portion of me survive and remain

with our fellowmen, in a world where all is transient, I should wish it to be this book: a witness to a faith won and shared in. As a torch of Eleusis, adorned with dark cypress and the star-bright narcissus, I dedicate it to the winged Soul of Her who has led me to the very heart of the Mysteries, that it may bear far and wide the sacred fire and proclaim the Dawn of universal Light!

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

THIS work, by Édouard Schuré, has appeared in fragmentary fashion at intervals during the past seven years. At the author's often expressed desire, a homogeneous form is here given to it, and the following pages are in exact conformity with the original.

It may be mentioned that the book has proved very successful in France, where it is in its twenty-fourth edition. It has been translated into German, Italian, Spanish and Russian.

Édouard Schuré was born in Strasbourg, Alsace. He first studied in Paris, and afterwards in Germany, where he became intimately acquainted with Richard Wagner, then living in Munich. His *Histoire du Drame musical*, followed by *Richard Wagner : son Œuvre et son Idée*, is a famous work, which has become a classic in France. In the creations of the great poet-musician of the past century it was the mystical aspect that, as it were, paved the way for our author in those studies in occult and transcendental philosophy, which were subsequently to take such complete possession of him. He sojourned several years in Italy, and it was

there he met Margherita Albana Mignaty, a Greek lady of birth and distinction, who had gathered round her a select literary circle in Florence. It was her lofty intelligence and the psychic atmosphere she created that proved a favourable soil for the conception of *The Great Initiates,* the work by which Édouard Schuré is best known, and which he regards as his most important contribution to literature.

His literary productions are many and varied. In History and Travels he has written *Les grandes légendes de France* and *Sanctuaires d'Orient;* in Fiction, *L'Ange et la Sphinge, Le Double,* and *La Prêtresse d'Isis;* and in Poetry, *La Vie mystique* and *L'Ame des Temps Nouveaux.* He has also written three dramas, belonging to his *Théâtre de l'Ame.* The first of these plays was given in 1909, and again in 1910, in Munich, by the German Theosophical Society, under the supervision and direction of Dr. Rudolf Steiner, the well-known theosophist.

Édouard Schuré is at present engaged on a great work, which will form a sequel to *The Great Initiates.* Its title will be *L'Evolution divine: Du Sphinx au Christ.* Important fragments of this work have already appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes.*

F. R.

INTRODUCTION
TO ESOTERIC TEACHING

"I feel convinced there will come a day when physiologists, poets, and philosophers will all speak the same language and understand one another."—CLAUDE BERNARD.

THE greatest evil of our times is the fact that Science and Religion appear as two hostile forces that cannot be reconciled with each other. It is an intellectual evil, all the more pernicious because it comes from above and filters quietly, though surely, into the minds of all, like a subtle poison breathed in with the very air around us. Every evil that affects the intelligence becomes, in the long run, one that injures the soul, and finally social in its nature.

So long as Christianity ingenuously affirmed the Christian faith in the midst of a Europe which was still semi-barbarian, as in the Middle Ages, it was the mightiest of moral forces; it formed the soul of present-day humanity. So long as experimental science, frankly established on a fresh basis in the sixteenth century, did nothing but claim the legitimate rights of reason and its

own boundless liberty, it was the greatest of intellectual forces; for it renewed the very face of the world, freed man from age-long bonds and offered an indestructible groundwork to the human mind.

But since the Church, no longer capable of proving her original dogma against the objections of Science, has shut herself up within this dogma as within a windowless house, setting faith over against reason as an absolute command, and one that it is impossible to dispute; since Science, dazzled by her discoveries in the physical world, and forgetting the very existence of the psychic and the intellectual worlds, has become agnostic in her methods and materialistic both in her principles and in her goal; since Philosophy, bewildered and powerless between the two, has, in a measure, abdicated her rights and fallen away into a vague kind of scepticism, a profound rupture has been brought about in the soul of society as well as in that of the individual. This conflict, at first necessary and useful from the fact that it established the rights of Reason and Science, finally became a source of weakness and decay. Religion responds to the needs of the heart, hence its eternal magic; Science, to those of the spirit, hence its invincible might. These two powers, however, have long been unable to come to a mutual understanding. Religion without

proof and Science without hope are now face to face, each challenging the other, without being able to gain the victory.

Hence arises profound opposition, a secret war, not merely between Church and State, but in Science herself, in the heart of all the Churches, and even in the consciousness of all thinking individuals. For, whoever we are, to whatsoever philosophic, æsthetic, or social school we belong, we bear within ourselves these two hostile worlds that are apparently irreconcilable and spring from two indestructible needs of mankind; the scientific and the religious. This state of things, which has existed for over a century, has certainly contributed, in no small degree, to the developing of human faculties, by setting them off against one another. It has inspired poetry and music with accents of sublime pathos and grandeur. At the present time, however, the prolonged and excessive tension has produced the opposite result. It has reached a state of decline, of loathing and weakness, just as, in the case of a patient, fever is followed by utter depression. Science concerns herself solely with the physical, the material world; modern Philosophy has lost control of intelligence; and Religion still rules the masses to some extent, though she reigns no longer in the upper classes of society; ever great in charity, her faith has now grown dim. The intellectual

leaders of the day are thoroughly sincere and open unbelievers or sceptics. But they have doubts of their very art, and look at one another with a smile, as did the Roman augurs of old. Both in public and in private they predict social catastrophes without seeking a remedy, or else they enshroud their gloomy oracles in prudent and plausible language. Under such auspices, literature and art have lost all understanding of the divine. No longer accustomed to eternal vistas, most of our modern youth have dabbled in what their new masters call naturalism, thus degrading the fair name of Nature. For what they dignify with this title is nothing more than an apology for base instincts, the slime and filth of vice, or else a complaisant portrayal of our social platitudes; in a word, the systematic negation of both soul and intelligence. And poor Psyche, having lost her wings, utters strange moans and sighs, deep in the hearts of the very persons who insult and repudiate her.

As a result of materialism, positivism, and scepticism, men of the present time have reached a false conception of truth and progress.

Our scientists, following with a wonderful degree of precision the experimental method of Bacon, in the investigation of the visible universe, and obtaining the most admirable results, have formed an idea of Truth that is altogether external and

material. They think they approach Truth in proportion as they amass large numbers of facts. Within their province, they are quite right. What is really a serious matter is that our philosophers and moralists have come to think in the same way. At this rate, primary causes and ultimate ends will never be fathomed by the mind of man. Suppose, for instance, we knew exactly what is taking place, materially speaking, in all the planets of the solar system—which, by the way, would form an excellent basis of induction—suppose we even knew the kind of beings that dwell in the satellites of Sirius and in several stars of the Milky Way. This would most certainly be wonderful; all the same, would our knowledge thereby be increased as to the total masses of stellar agglomerations, without speaking of the nebula of Andromeda and the Magellanic cloud? Thus, the present generation of men regards the development of humanity as an eternal advance towards a truth that is neither defined nor capable of being defined, and is for ever inaccessible.

Such is the conception of the philosophy of positivism, according to Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer, that has prevailed of recent years.

Now, Truth was something quite different for the sages and theosophists of Greece and the East. They doubtless knew that it could not be

firmly embraced and kept in equilibrium, without precise knowledge of the physical world; but they were also aware that it has its dwelling, above all, within ourselves, in the intellectual principles and the spiritual life of the soul. To them, the soul was the only, the divine reality: the key that unlocked the universe. By concentrating their will and developing its latent powers they attained to that living centre they called God, whose light enables us to comprehend men and other living beings. To them, what we call progress, *i.e.* the history of the world and of mankind, was nothing else than the evolution in time and space of this central cause, this final end. If you regard these theosophists as mere visionaries, paltry dreamers, or fakirs perched on columns, you are mistaken; the world has never known greater men of action, in the fullest meaning of the term. They shine like stars of the first magnitude in the heaven of souls. Their names are: Krishna, Bouddha, Zoroaster, Hermes, Moses, Pythagoras, Jesus, and they were powerful moulders of spirits, mighty quickeners of souls, and wholesome organisers of societies. Living for their one idea, ever prepared to meet death, knowing, as they did, that death for Truth is the one efficacious and supreme deed, they established, first, sciences and religions, then, literature and art, all of which form the very sustenance and life of mankind. And what are

the positivism and the scepticism of the present day now producing? A barren generation, devoid of ideal, light or faith, believing neither in the soul, in God, nor in the future of the race; neither in this life nor in the next, lacking in will-power, doubting both itself and human liberty.

"By their fruits ye shall know them," said Jesus. This saying of the Master of masters applies to teachings as well as to men. The thought is indeed forced upon one: either truth is for ever inaccessible to man, or it has largely been within the grasp of the mightiest sages and the first initiators of earth. It is to be found at the root of all great religions and in the sacred books of all peoples. But one must know how to bring it to light.

If we examine the history of religions with eyes opened to the central truth which interior initiation alone can give, we are filled with amaze. What we see in no way resembles what is taught by the Church, which limits revelation to Christianity alone and accepts it only in its primary signification. And yet this bears but a faint resemblance to what is taught by purely naturalistic science in the University of Paris, though the latter, on the whole, takes a wider outlook. It brings all religions together and applies to them one and the same method of investigation. Its erudition is profound and its zeal most ad-

mirable, but it has not yet risen to *the standpoint of comparative esoterism* which shows forth the history of religions and of humanity in an entirely new aspect. From these heights let us now see what we can learn.

All great religions have an exterior and an interior history; the one open to all, the other secret. By exterior history are meant the dogmas and myths publicly taught in temples and schools, and recognised in popular worship and superstitions. By interior history are meant the profound science, the secret doctrine, the occult actions of the great initiates, prophets, or reformers who established, maintained, and propagated these religions. The first—official history, which any one may read — takes place in the open glare of daylight; none the less is it obscure, confused, and contradictory. The second, which may be called esoteric tradition or the doctrine of the mysteries, is very difficult to penetrate. It is enacted in the heart of the temples, in the secret brotherhoods, and its most thrilling dramas have their sphere of action in the souls of the great prophets who never entrusted either to parchment or to disciples their supreme struggles, or divine flights of ecstasy. It must be divined. When once seen, however, it shines forth, luminous and organic, always in harmony with itself. It might also be called the history of eternal, of universal religion.

In it is set forth the reality of things; the *obverse* of human consciousness, of which history shows us nothing but the slowly-elaborated *reverse.* Here we come to the generating point of Religion and Philosophy which meet in integral science at the other end of the ellipse. This point corresponds to transcendental truths; we find therein the cause, origin and end of the prodigious work of centuries — Providence in its terrestrial agents. This history is the only one with which we are here concerned.

As for the Aryan race, its germ and nucleus are found in the Vedas. Its first historic crystallisation appears in the trinitarian doctrine of Krishna, who conferred on Brahmanism its power and gave the religion of India its indelible characteristics. Buddha, who according to the chronology of the Brahmans came two thousand four hundred years after Krishna, simply shows forth another side of occult teaching, that of metempsychosis and of entire series of existences, bound together by the law of Karma. Although Buddhism was a democratic, social and moral revolution against aristocratic and sacerdotal Brahmanism, its metaphysical basis was the same, though not so complete.

The antiquity of sacred teaching is no less striking in Egypt, whose traditions date back to a civilisation long previous to the appearance

of the Aryan race on the stage of history. One may suppose, even in these latter days, that the trinitarian monism set forth in the Greek books of Hermes Trismegistus was a compilation of the school of Alexandria brought about by the dual influence of Jewish Christianity and Neo-Platonism. Believers and unbelievers, historians and theologians have never, hitherto, ceased unanimously to affirm this. At the present time, this theory has fallen to pieces before the discoveries of Egyptian epigraphy. The fundamental authenticity of the books of Hermes as documents of the ancient wisdom of Egypt has been triumphantly demonstrated by deciphered hieroglyphs. Not only do the inscriptions on the *stelæ* of Thebes and Memphis confirm the whole chronology of Manetho, they also prove that the priests of Amen-Rā taught metaphysics, though in another manner, on the banks of the Ganges.[1] One may say here, with the Hebrew prophet, that "the stone cries out of the wall." For, like the "midnight sun" which was said to shine on the Mysteries of Isis and Osiris, the thought of Hermes, the ancient doctrine of the solar world, was relit in the tombs of the kings, and shed its radiance even on the papyrus of the *Book of the Dead*, preserved by mummies four thousand years old.

[1] See the fine works of François Lenormand and of M. Maspéro.

In Greece, esoteric thought is both more manifest and more veiled than elsewhere; more manifest because it gambols and sports in the atmosphere of a delightfully human mythology, because it flows like ambrosial blood in the veins of this civilisation and issues from the very pores of its Gods like perfume or dew from heaven. On the other hand, the deep scientific thought that brought all these myths into being is often more difficult to grasp by reason of their very seductiveness and the embellishments they have received from the poets. The sublime principles, however, of Doric theosophy and Delphic wisdom are inscribed in golden letters in Orphic fragments and the Pythagorean synthesis, as also in the dialectical and rather fantastic diffusion of Plato's doctrines. Finally, the school of Alexandria supplies us with useful interpretations, for it was the first partially to publish and to comment on the meaning of the mysteries during the decline of the Greek religion and the rapid growth of Christianity.

The occult tradition of Israel coming down through Egypt, Chaldæa and Persia has been preserved for us in strange, obscure forms, though in all its profundity and range, by the *Cabala* or oral tradition, from the *Zohar* and the *Sepher Jezirah*, attributed to Simon Ben Jochai, on to the commentaries of Maimonides.

This tradition, mysteriously concealed in Genesis and in the symbology of the Prophets, is strikingly manifested in the admirable work of Fabre d'Olivet on *La Langue hébraïque restituée*, which aims at reconstructing the real cosmogony of Moses, in Egyptian fashion, from the threefold meaning of each verse—almost of each word—in the first ten chapters of Genesis.

As regards Christian esoterism, it scatters its rays of light over the Gospels, already illumined by Essenian and Gnostic traditions. Like a living spring, it gushes forth from the words of the Christ, from His parables, from the inmost depths of that incomparable, that truly divine soul. At the same time, the Gospel of Saint John gives us the key to the inner and sublime teaching of Jesus, along with the meaning and import of its promise. Here we find the doctrine of the Trinity and the Divine Word, which had been taught for thousands of years in the temples of Egypt and India, exemplified in the person of the prince of initiates, the greatest of the sons of God.

Accordingly, the application of the method we have called comparative esoterism to the history of religions, leads us to a very important result, which may be formulated in these terms : the antiquity, continuity, and essential unity of esoteric teaching. It must be acknowledged that

this is a remarkable fact, as it takes for granted that sages and prophets belonging to the most diverse ages have reached conclusions identical in substance though differing in form, regarding the first and last of truths, and always along the same path of interior initiation and meditation. Let us add, too, that these sages and prophets have been the greatest benefactors of mankind, saviours whose redeeming power has rescued men from the abyss of negation and of their own lower nature.

After this, may it not be said that, as Leibnitz expresses it, there is a kind of eternal philosophy, *perennis quædam philosophia*, which constitutes the primordial link between science and religion, and the final unity of the two?

Ancient theosophy, as professed in India, Egypt, and Greece, constituted a veritable encyclopædia, generally divided into four categories: (1) *Theogony* or the science of absolute principles, identical with *the science of Numbers* as applied to the universe, or sacred mathematics; (2) *Cosmogony*, the realisation of eternal principles in time and space, or *involution* of spirit in matter, world-periods; (3) *Psychology*, the constitution of man, *evolution* of the soul through the chain of existences; (4) *Physics*, the science of the kingdoms of terrestrial nature and of its properties. The inductive and experimental methods were com-

bined and tested by one another in these different orders of sciences, and to each of them there was a corresponding art. These were, taking them in inverse order and beginning with physical science: (1) *a special art of healing*, based on a knowledge of the occult properties of minerals, plants, and animals; *alchemy* or the transmutation of metals, the disintegration and re-integration of matter by the universal agent, an art practised in ancient Egypt, according to Olympiodorus, who called it chrysopœa and argyropœa, the manufacture of gold and silver; (2) *the psychurgic arts* corresponding to the forces of the soul, magic and divination; (3) *celestial genethliacs* or astrology, the art of discovering the relations between the destinies of nations or individuals, and the movements of the universe as set forth by the revolutions of the constellations; (4) *theurgy*, the supreme art of the magus, as rare as it is dangerous and difficult, that of bringing the soul into conscious relation with the different orders of spirits, and of acting upon them.

As may be seen, all science and art was comprised in this theosophy, issuing from one common principle which I will call in present-day language *intellectual monism, evolutive and transcendental spiritualism.* The essential principles of esoteric doctrine may be formulated as follows: Spirit is the only reality. Matter

is nothing but its lower, changing, ephemeral expression, its dynamism in space and time. Creation is eternal, it continues just as life does. The microcosm-man is, by reason of his threefold constitution (spirit, soul, and body), the image and mirror of the macrocosm-universe (divine, human, and natural world), itself the product of the ineffable God, the absolute Spirit which is in its nature: Father, Mother, and Son (essence, substance, and life). It is for this reason that man, the image of God, can become His living word. Gnosis, or the rational mysticism of all times, is the art of finding God in oneself, by developing the occult depths and latent powers of consciousness. The human soul, the individuality, is immortal in its essence. Its development takes place on a plane which alternately ascends and descends, in existences that are spiritual and corporeal in turn. Reincarnation is the law of its evolution. On reaching perfection it escapes from this law and returns to pure spirit, to God in the fulness of His consciousness. Just as the soul rises above the law of the struggle for life when it becomes conscious of its humanity, so also does it rise above the law of reincarnation when it becomes conscious of its divinity.

Immense is the prospect opening out to one who stands on the threshold of theosophy, especially when compared with the narrow and dull horizon

within which man is confined by materialism, or with the childish data of clerical theology, so impossible of acceptance. On seeing it for the first time, one feels dazed; the sense of the infinite proves overpowering. Unconscious depths open within ourselves, showing us the abyss from which we are emerging and the giddy heights to which we aspire. Entranced by this sense of immensity, though terrified at the distance, we ask to be no more, we appeal to *Nirvana!* Then we see that this weakness is nothing more than the weariness of the mariner, ready to fling away his oar when the storm is at its height. It has been said that man was born in the hollow of a wave and knows nothing of the mighty ocean stretching before and behind him. This is true; but transcendental mysticism drives our barque on to the crest of a wave, and there, continually lashed by the furious tempest, we learn something of the sublimity of its rhythm; and the eye, compassing the vault of heaven, rests in its azure calm.

Surprise increases when we recognise that, from the time of Bacon and Descartes, modern science tends involuntarily, though all the more surely, to revert to the principles of ancient theosophy. Without giving up the hypothesis of atoms, physics has insensibly come to identify the idea of matter with that of force, a step towards spiritualistic

dynamism. To explain light, magnetism, and electricity, scientists have been forced to posit the existence of a matter which is subtle and absolutely imponderable, filling space and penetrating all bodies, matter which they have called ether, and this is a step in the direction of the ancient theosophical idea of the *soul of the world.* The intelligent docility of this matter and its capacity for receiving impressions are evident from Bell's experiment, which proves the transmission of sound by light.[1] Of all sciences, those which seem to have compromised spiritualism most are comparative zoology and anthropology. In reality they will prove to have served it by setting forth the laws of the intelligible world in the animal one, and the manner in which the former affects the latter. Darwin put an end to the childish idea of creation according to primitive theology. In this connection, he merely reverted to the ideas of ancient theosophy. Pythagoras had already said: "Man is related to the animal."

[1] Bell's experiment. A ray of light is cast on a plate of selenium which sends it back on to another plate — some distance away—of the same metal. This latter communicates with a galvanic battery, to which a telephone is attached. The words uttered behind the first plate are distinctly heard through the telephone at the end of the second plate. The ray of light, accordingly, has served as a telephone wire. The sound waves have become transformed into light waves, the latter into galvanic waves, and these have become once again sound waves.

Darwin demonstrated the laws which nature obeys in following out the divine plan: the struggle for life, heredity, and natural selection. He proved the variableness of species, reduced their number, and fixed what might be called their low-water mark. His disciples, however, the theorists of absolute transformism, who tried to prove that all species came from one prototype, and that their presence depended on nothing but the influences of environment, have perverted facts in favour of a purely external and materialistic conception of nature. No; environment no more explains species than the laws of physics explain those of chemistry, or than chemistry explains the principle governing the evolution of the vegetable; or the latter, the principle governing that of the animal. The great families of animals correspond to the eternal types of life; they may, indeed, be called signatures of the Spirit and indicate varying degrees of consciousness. The appearance of mammalia after reptiles and birds cannot be explained by a change of terrestrial environment; this latter is nothing but a condition thereof. It implies a new embryogeny, and consequently a new intellectual and animistic force acting deep within nature, which we call the "beyond" as regards sense perception. Were it not for this intellectual and animistic force it would be impossible to explain even the ap-

pearance of an organised cell in the inorganic world. Finally Man, who sums up and crowns the series of beings, reveals all the divine thought in the harmony of his organs and the perfection of his form, for he is a living image of the universal Soul, of active Intelligence. Condensing all the laws of evolution and the whole of nature in his body, he dominates and rises above nature, in order to enter, freely and in full consciousness, into the boundless kingdom of Spirit.

Experimental psychology, which is grounded on physiology, and has shown a tendency, ever since the beginning of the nineteenth century, to become a science again, has brought contemporary scientists to the threshold of another world, the world of the soul itself, wherein new laws hold sway, without the analogies ceasing to hold good. We hear mention of medical investigations and discoveries of animal magnetism, somnambulism, and all the different mental states of the subconscious self from lucid sleep through double vision on to a state of trance. So far, modern science has been merely feeling its way in this domain where the science of the temples of old made straight for the goal because it possessed the necessary principles and interpretations. Nor is it less true that science has discovered in this region a whole series of facts which appear astonishing, wonder-

ful, and inexplicable, for they plainly contradict the materialistic theories under whose sway it acquired the habit of thinking and experimenting. There is nothing more instructive than the indignant incredulity of certain materialistic scientists when brought face to face with all those phenomena that aim at proving the existence of an invisible, a spiritual world. At the present time, whoever presumes to prove the existence of the soul, scandalises the orthodoxy of atheism, just as that of the Church in former times was scandalised by the denial of God. True, it is no longer life, but reputation that is risked. At all events, what is implied by the simplest phenomenon of mental suggestion at a distance and by pure thought, a phenomenon continually being demonstrated in the annals of magnetism,[1] is a mode of action, both of mind and will, outside of physical law or the visible universe. Thus, the door of the Invisible has been thrown open. In the higher phenomena of somnambulism, this world appears in its full extent. But we will not go beyond what is established by official science.

If we pass from the experimental and objective to the inner and subjective psychology of our times, expressed in poetry, music, and literature, we shall find that a spirit of unconscious esoterism

[1] See the fine book of M. Ochorowitz on *Mental Suggestion*.

breathes through them. Never has the aspiration after spiritual life, the invisible world, though rejected by the materialistic theories of scientists and by the opinion of society, been more serious and real than it is now. This aspiration may be seen in the regrets and doubts, the gloomy melancholy and even the blasphemies of our realistic novelists and decadent poets. Never has the human soul had a deeper feeling of the inadequacy, the wretchedness and unreality of its present life, never has it aspired more ardently after the invisible "beyond," though unable to believe in it. At times its intuition even reaches the point of formulating transcendental truths which have nothing whatever to do with the system acknowledged by its reason, which contradict its superficial opinions and are involuntary flashes of its occult consciousness. In proof of this we will quote a passage from a great thinker who experienced all the bitterness and moral loneliness of this period: "Every sphere of being," says Frédéric Amiel, "tends towards a loftier "sphere, of which, even now, it has revelations "and antecedent impressions. The ideal, in all its "forms, is the anticipation, the prophetic vision of "this existence, higher than its own, to which each "being is ever aspiring. This existence, superior "in dignity, is of a more interior, that is to say, "more spiritual nature. Just as volcanoes reveal

"to us the secrets of the interior of the globe, so "enthusiasm and ecstasy are fleeting explosions of "this interior world of the soul, and human life is "nothing but the preparation for and the coming "of this spiritual life. Innumerable are the stages "of initiation. Watch, therefore, disciple of life, "chrysalis of an angel, work out thy future birth, "for the divine Odyssey is nought but a series of "metamorphoses, ever more and more ethereal, in "which each form, the result of those that have "gone before, is the condition of those that follow. "Divine life is a series of successive deaths, in "which the spirit throws off its imperfections and "symbols and yields to the growing attraction of "that ineffable centre of gravitation, the sun of "intelligence and love." Habitually, Amiel was nothing more than the combination of an extremely intelligent Hegelian and a superior moralist. But when he penned these inspired lines he proved himself to be a profound theosophist, for the very essence of esoteric truth could not possibly be expressed in more striking or luminous fashion.

This rough outline is sufficient to demonstrate that the science and spirit of modern times are, without knowing or wishing it, preparing for the reconstruction of ancient theosophy with more precise instruments and on a more solid foundation. As Lamartine says, man is a weaver

working on the reverse side of the loom of time. The day will come when, passing to the other side of the cloth, he will behold the glorious and magnificent pattern he has, for centuries past, been weaving with his own hands, without perceiving anything else than the tangled and disordered threads of the reverse side. And when that day comes, he will hail Providence, as manifested within himself. Then, too, will be confirmed the words of a Hermetic treatise belonging to our own times, words which will not seem too bold to such as have penetrated deeply enough into occult traditions to catch a faint glimmering of their wonderful unity: "Esoteric doctrine is not merely a science, a "philosophy, a morality, and a religion. It is *the* "science, *the* philosophy, *the* morality, and *the* "religion of which all the rest are nothing but "preparations or degeneracies, partial or erroneous "expressions, according as they proceed to them "or turn aside from them."[1]

It would be idle to think that we had offered a complete demonstration of this science of sciences. To effect this, nothing less would be needed than to have all known and unknown sciences reconstituted according to their hierarchies, and reorganised in the spirit of esoterism.

[1] *The Perfect Way: or, The Finding of Christ*, by Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland, London, 1882.

All we hope to prove is that the doctrine of the mysteries is at the very source of our civilisation; that it has created the great religions both Aryan and Semitic; that Christianity is bringing the whole human race to this doctrine, by means of its esoteric caution; that the general progress of modern science providentially tends in this direction; and finally, that men must meet there as in one common haven wherein they may find the synthesis of their separate elements.

It may be said that wherever any portion of esoteric teaching is met with, there it virtually exists in its entirety, for each of its parts presupposes or generates the rest. This teaching was the possession of the mighty sages and inspired prophets of the past, as it will be of those to come. The light may be more or less intense, but it is ever the same unchanging light. Forms, details, modes of application may vary *ad infinitum*, but the real essence, the principles and ends, will never change. None the less will there be found in this book a kind of gradual development, a successful revelation of the doctrine in its various aspects, from initiate to initiate, each of whom represents one of the great religions which have contributed to the constitution of present-day humanity, and who, as they follow one another, mark the line of evolution that particular religion has followed in the present cycle,

down from the days of ancient Egypt and the early Aryans. This revelation will, then, be seen to result from no abstract or scholastic exposition, but rather from the ardent souls of mighty and inspired seers, from the living drama of history.

In this series of lives, Rama simply shows us the approaches of the temple. Krishna and Hermes give us the key and interpretation. Moses, Orpheus, and Pythagoras show us the interior. Jesus Christ represents the Holy of Holies.

This book is entirely the outcome of a burning desire and longing after the higher, the eternal and complete truth, without which all partial truths are but a snare and a delusion. They will understand me, who feel, as I do, that the present age, with all its material prosperity, is but a gloomy waste of sands from the standpoint of the immortal aspirations of the soul. This is a most critical time, and the far-reaching consequences of agnosticism are beginning to manifest themselves in social disintegration. "To be or not to be, that is the question," for France and for the whole of Europe. The one thing needed is to establish the great central, organic truths on foundations that cannot be shaken, if we would, once for all, avoid plunging into the slough of materialism and anarchy.

Science and Religion, the twin guardians of

civilisation, have both lost their supreme gift, the magic of a mighty and powerful education. The temples of India and Egypt have produced the greatest sages on earth. Heroes and poets have been moulded in those of Greece. The apostles of Christ have been sublime martyrs and have themselves produced martyrs in thousands. The Church of the Middle Ages, despite her primitive theology, created saints and knights, because she had faith, and the spirit of Christ overshadowed her from time to time. At the present day, neither the Church imprisoned in dogma, nor Science bound up in matter, can any longer produce complete human beings. The art of creating and forging souls is lost; it will only be recovered when Science and Religion, united in one living force, together, and of one accord, apply themselves to the welfare and the salvation of mankind. To effect this, Science would not have to change its methods, but rather to extend its sphere of action; Christianity need not change its traditions, but only understand their origin, spirit, and import.

This period of intellectual regeneration and social transformation will come; of that we are convinced. Already there are sure signs indicative of its approach. When Science has the knowledge, Religion will have the power, and Man will act with renewed energy. The Art of life

and each separate art can be regenerated only through the mutual understanding of all three.

Meanwhile, what can be done in these times of gloom and darkness? Faith, says a great teacher, is the courage of the mind which plunges ahead and is confident of finding truth. This faith is not the enemy of reason, but rather its torch; it is the faith of Christopher Columbus and of Galileo, demanding proof and counter-proof, *provando e riprovando*, the only faith possible at the present time.

For those who have irrevocably lost it, and these are many in number, since the example is set by the upper classes, the path is smooth and easy to follow. They have only to go with the stream, submit to their times instead of struggling against them, become resigned to doubt or to an attitude of negation, console themselves for human misery and approaching cataclysms by a smile of disdain, and cloak the profound nothingness of things — in which alone they believe — with a shining veil, to which the fair name of ideal is given, thinking all the while that it is nothing else than a useful illusion.

As for the rest of us, poor lost mortals, who believe that the Ideal is the only Reality, the only Truth, in the midst of a changing and fleeting world, who believe in the sanction and fulfilment of its promises, both in the history of mankind

and in the life to come, who know that this sanction is necessary, that it is the reward of human brotherhood, the very *raison d'être* of the universe and the logic of God; for us who have this conviction, there is only one thing we must resolve to do: affirm this Truth as loudly and fearlessly as possible, throw ourselves along with it and for its sake into the arena of action, and, rising above the confusion of the fray, endeavour by meditation and individual initiation, to enter into the Temple of immutable Ideas, there to arm ourselves with Principles that nothing can shatter.

This is what I have endeavoured to do in the pages of this book, hoping that others will follow and improve on my efforts.

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RAMA

(THE ARYAN CYCLE)

Zoroaster asked of Ormuzd, the mighty Creator: Who was the first man with whom thou hast held converse?

Ormuzd replied: It was the noble, beautiful Yima at the head of the Courageous.

I told him to watch over the worlds that belong to me, and gave him a golden sword, a weapon of victory.

And Yima went forward along the path of the sun, and gathered together men of courage in the famous *Airyana-Vaeïa*, pure-created.

ZEND-AVESTA (*Vendidad-Sade*, 2nd Fargard).

O Agni! Sacred fire! Purifying fire! Thou who sleepest in wood and mountest in shining flames on the altar, thou art the heart of sacrifice, the fearless aspiration of prayer, the divine spark concealed in all things, and the glorious soul of the sun.

Vedic Hymn.

RAMA

CHAPTER I

THE HUMAN RACES AND THE ORIGINS OF RELIGION

"*Heaven is my Father*, he it was who begat me. My family consists of all this heavenly company. *The great Earth is my Mother.* The highest part of its surface is her womb ; there *the Father fecundates her who is at once his bride and his daughter.*"

Thus sang the Vedic poet, from four to five thousand years ago, before an altar of earth on which was burning a fire of dry herbs. These strange words breathe forth a spirit of profound divination, a lofty consciousness. They contain the secret of the double origin of mankind. Previous to and higher than the earth is the divine type of man ; celestial is the origin of his soul. His body, however, is the product of the elements of earth, fecundated by a cosmic essence. The

embraces of Ouranos and the mighty Mother, in the language of the Mysteries, signify the outpourings of souls or spiritual monads which fecundate the germs of earth ; the organising principles without which matter would be nothing more than an inert, scattered mass. The highest part of the earth's surface, which the Vedic poet calls her womb, signifies the continents and mountains, the cradles of human races. Heaven : *Varuna*, the Ouranos of the Greeks, represents the invisible, hyperphysical order, eternal and intellectual ; it embraces the whole Infinitude of Time and Space.

In this chapter we shall consider only the terrestrial origins of mankind, according to esoteric tradition, confirmed by contemporary anthropological and ethnological science.

The four races which cover the globe at the present time are the offspring of different earths and zones. Successive creations, slow elaborations of the earth in travail, the continents emerged from the seas at considerable intervals of time, which the ancient priests of India called interdiluvian cycles. Stretching over thousands of years, each continent gave birth to its own flora and fauna, crowned by a human race of different colour.

The southern continent, swallowed up by the last great deluge, was the cradle of the primitive red race, of which the American Indians are merely the remnant, the offspring of Troglodytes, who climbed to the summits of the mountains when their continent crumbled to pieces. Africa is the mother of the black race, which the Greeks called Ethiopian. Asia brought forth the yellow race, represented by the Chinese. The latest arrival, the white race, came from the forests of Europe, between the storms of the Atlantic and the smiling calm of the Mediterranean. All human varieties result from the blending, combination, degeneracy, or selection of these four great races. In former cycles, red and black reigned successively in powerful civilisations which have left traces both in Cyclopean constructions and in the architecture of Mexico. The temples of India and Egypt contained abridged traditions regarding these vanished civilisations.

In the present cycle the white is the predominating race, and, if the probable antiquity of Egypt and India be calculated, its preponderating influence will be found to date back seven or eight thousand years.[1]

[1] "This division of humanity into four original, successive races was admitted by the most ancient priests of Egypt. They are repre-

According to Brahmanic traditions, civilisation on our earth began fifty thousand years ago, with the red race, over the southern continent, when the whole of Europe and a portion of Asia were still beneath the waves of ocean. These mythologies also spoke of a previous race of giants. In certain caverns of Thibet there have been found gigantic human bones, the structure of which rather resembles that of the ape than of man. They point to a primitive, intermediate human race, one still bordering on an animal condition, which possessed neither articulate language, social organisation, nor religion. For these three things always spring into being at once ; that is the meaning of the remarkable bardic triad which says, "Three things come into being together: God, light, and freedom." With the first feeble stammerings of speech, society and the vague notion of divine order come forth. This is the breath of Jehovah in the mouth of Adam, the Word of Hermes, the law of the first Manu, the fire of Prometheus. A divine thrill

sented by four figures, of different types and colours, in the pictures of the tomb of Seti I. at Thebes. The red race bears the name of *Rot ;* the Asiatic race, yellow in colour, that of *Amou ;* the black African race that of *Halasiou ;* the white, light-haired Lybico-European that of *Tamahou*."—Lenormant, *Histoire des Peuples a Orient*, I.

passes through the human fauna. The red race, we stated, occupied the southern continent—now sunk beneath the waves—called Atlantis by Plato, according to Egyptian traditions. A great cataclysm destroyed a portion of it and scattered the remnants. Several Polynesian races, as also the North American Indians, and the Aztecs whom Francisco Pizarro came across in Mexico, are survivors of the ancient red race, the civilisation of which—now lost for ever—was one of material splendour and glory. The souls of these poor laggards are weighed down with the incurable melancholy of a dying race devoid of all hope.

After the red the black race ruled the globe. The superior type must not be sought for in the degenerate negro, but rather in the Nubian and the Abyssinian, in whom is preserved the mould of the race, on reaching its highest point in civilisation. In prehistoric times the blacks invaded the south of Europe; they were repulsed by the whites, and the memory of them has been completely obliterated from our popular traditions. All the same, they have left therein two ineffaceable traces: a horror of the dragon, the emblem of their kings, and the idea that the devil is black. The blacks returned the insult by making their devil white. During their sove-

reignty, the blacks had religious centres in Upper Egypt and in India. Their Cyclopean towns rose tier upon tier on the mountains of Africa, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Their social organisation consisted of an absolute theocracy. Above, were the priests, dreaded as though they were gods; below, were crawling tribes without any recognised family; whilst the women were slaves. These priests had a fund of profound knowledge; they were acquainted with the principle of the divine unity of the universe and the cult of the stars, which, under the name of *Sabianism*, gradually spread amongst the white peoples. Still, between the science of the black priests and the rude fetichism of the masses, there was no intermediary, no idealistic art or suggestive mythology. Industry, however, had already reached an advanced stage, especially the art of dealing with huge masses of stone by means of the *ballista*, and that of casting metal in immense furnaces, at which task prisoners of war were forced to labour. Consequently, to this race, so physically powerful, possessed of passionate energy and a strong capacity for application, religion was indeed the reign of might by terror. Nature and God scarcely appeared to the consciousness of these young races in any other form than that

of the dragon, that terrible antediluvian animal which the kings caused to be painted on their banners and the priests carved on the doors of the temples.

If the African sun brought forth the black race, the ice of the Arctic pole may be said to have witnessed the birth of the white race. These were the Hyperboreans, spoken of in Greek mythology. Tawny-haired, blue-eyed men came from the North, across forests illumined by the lights of the aurora borealis, and accompanied by dogs and reindeer. They were commanded by bold chieftains and urged forward by female seers. Golden locks and azure eyes: such were the predestined colours. This race is to invent the worship of the sun and of sacred fire, and bring into the world a longing for the heaven life. At times it will revolt against heaven and desire to scale its heights; then again it will bow down before its glory in utter adoration.

Like the others, the white race had to shake itself free from its savage condition before attaining to self-consciousness. Its distinctive signs are fondness for individual liberty, that reflective sensitiveness which creates the power of sympathy; and the predominance of the intellect, giving an idealistic and symbolical turn to the imagination.

Animal sensibility brought about attachment, the preference of one man for one woman; hence the tendency of this race towards monogamy, the conjugal principle, and family life. The craving for liberty, allied to that for sociability, created the clan, with its elective principle. The imagination of the ideal began the worship of ancestors, which forms the root and centre of religion in all white nations.

The social and political principle shows itself when a certain number of men, still half savage, pressed by a hostile tribe, meet together instinctively and choose the strongest and most intelligent to defend and rule them. When this happens, society comes into existence. The chief is a future king; his companions, the nobles at his court; the old men, thoughtful and reflecting, incapable of marching to battle, form a kind of senate or assembly of elders. But how is religion born? This is said to have originated in the fear of primitive man before the powers of nature. Fear, however, has nothing in common with respect and love. It does not connect the fact with the idea, the visible with the invisible, man with God. So long as man did nothing but tremble before nature, he was not yet really a man. This he became when he seized the bond

uniting him to past and future, to something superior and beneficent, when he worshipped that mysterious unknown being. But how did he worship for the first time?

Fabre d'Olivet gives us an inspired and suggestive hypothesis as to the way in which ancestral worship must have been established in the white race.[1] Two rival warriors of a bellicose clan are quarrelling. In mad fury they spring upon each other. At that moment a woman, sister of the one and wife of the other, with dishevelled locks, springs forward and separates them. With flashing eyes and commanding accents she exclaims, in panting utterance, that she has seen the Ancestor of the race, the conquering warrior of bygone days, appear to her in the forest. He will not have it that two warrior brothers should fight, but rather that they should unite against the common foe. "It was the ghost of the great Ancestor who spoke to me," exclaims the inspired woman; "I saw him!" What she says, she believes. Convinced herself, she convinces others. In utter astonishment, and as though overwhelmed by some invincible force, the two opponents become reconciled and look upon the woman as a kind of divinity.

[1] *Histoire philosophique du genre humain*, vol. i.

Such inspirations, followed by sudden revulsions of feeling, must have taken place frequently and in divers forms, in the prehistoric life of the white race. In barbarian races it is the woman who, by reason of her nervous sensibility, is the first to have a presentiment of the occult, to affirm the invisible. Now let us consider for a moment the unexpected, the prodigious consequences of an event such as the one just mentioned. In the clan and throughout the tribe every one speaks of the marvellous thing. The oak beneath which the inspired woman has seen the apparition becomes a sacred tree. She is taken back to it, and there, beneath the magnetic influence of the moon, which plunges her into a visionary condition, she continues to prophesy in the name of the great Ancestor. Before long this woman, and others like her, standing on the rocks, in the midst of the glades, beneath the murmur of the breeze and of the distant ocean, will evoke the phantom souls of the ancestors to appear before the people, all trembling with emotion ; and the latter will see, or believe that they see them, attracted by magic incantations in the floating haze, with its lunar transparencies. The last of the great Celts, Ossian, evokes Fingal and his companions in the

gathering clouds. Thus at the very outset of social life ancestral worship is established in the white race. The great Ancestor becomes the god of the tribe. This is the beginning of religion.

But it is not all. Round the prophetess groups of old men form themselves; they keep watch over her in her lucid slumbering and prophetic ecstasy. They study her different states of mind, verify her revelations, and interpret her oracles. They notice that when she prophesies, in visionary state, her face becomes transfigured, her words are rhythmic, and the high-toned voice utters her oracles as she chants to a solemn melopæia[1] all pregnant with meaning. Hence arose verse and strophe, poetry and music, whose origin is re-

[1] All who have seen a real somnambulist have been struck by the singular intellectual exaltation produced in lucid sleep. For the benefit of such as have not witnessed such phenomena, and who might doubt their existence, we will quote a passage from the famous David Strauss, whom no one would suspect of being superstitious. When staying with his friend, Dr. Justinus Kerner, he saw the celebrated "seer of Prévorst," and describes her as follows: "Shortly afterwards, the visionary fell into a magnetic sleep. For the first time in my life I then had a sight of that wonderful condition, and that, I may say, in its finest and purest manifestation. The countenance assumed an expression of suffering, though of lofty tenderness, inundated, as it were, with celestial radiance; *the language was clear and measured, solemn and musical, a kind of recitative;* there overflowed an abundance of sentiments, which might be compared to masses of clouds, sometimes light, sometimes dark, gliding above the soul, or again *to melancholy, serene breezes swelling from the chords of a marvellous Æolian harp.*"—Translated by R. Lindau, *Biographie Générale*, art. "Kerner."

garded as divine by all nations of the Aryan race. The idea of revelation could only be produced from facts of this kind. We see, springing into being, religion and worship, priests and poetry, at one and the same time.

In Asia, especially in Persia and India, where people of the white race founded the first Aryan civilisations by intermarrying with nations of a different colour, men rapidly gained the ascendency over women in the matter of religious inspiration. There we no longer hear mention of any except sages, rishis and prophets. The woman, subjected and kept in the background, is no longer priestess except at the hearth. In Europe, however, traces of the preponderating *rôle* of woman are found in peoples of the same origin, who have remained barbarians for thousands of years. It breaks out in the Pythoness of Scandinavia, in the Völva, or Sibyl, of the Edda, in the Celtic druidesses, in the female soothsayers who accompanied the Germanic armies and decided the day on which battle was to be waged,[1] and even in the Thracian Bacchantes. The prehistoric seeress is found again in the Pythoness of Delphi.

[1] See the last battle between Ariovistus and Cæsar, in the *Commentaries* of the latter.

The primitive prophetesses of the white race were organised into colleges of druidesses, under the supervision of learned old men, or druids—the men of the oak. At first they were of great service and utility. By means of their intuition, their enthusiasm and power of divination, they gave a mighty impulse to the race which had only come to the beginning of its struggle with the blacks, a struggle destined to last several centuries. The rapid corruption of this institution, however, and the terrible abuses arising out of it, were inevitable. Feeling themselves mistresses of the destinies of the nations, the druidesses were determined at all costs to dominate them. Inspiration failing them, they endeavoured to rule by terror, exacting human sacrifices, which they made the essential element of their cult. In this they were favoured by the heroic instincts of the race. The whites were not lacking in courage, their warriors despised death, and at the very first appeal came along of their own accord and in a spirit of bravado to cast themselves down beneath the knife of the bloodthirsty priestesses. In human hecatombs the living were despatched as messengers to the dead, and in this way, it was believed, the favours of the ancestors would be obtained. This perpetual menace

hanging over the heads of the chiefs, through the utterances of the prophetesses and druids, became a formidable instrument of domination in their hands.

Such is the perversion which the noblest instincts of human nature must submit to, unless they are mastered by a wise authority, directed towards good by a higher consciousness. When abandoned to the hazard of ambition and personal passion, inspiration degenerates into superstition ; courage into ferocity ; the sublime idea of sacrifice into an instrument of tyranny, a treacherous, cruel exploitation.

The white race, however, was only in its infancy, though a violent and foolish one ; it had other and more sanguinary crises to pass through. Now it was roused by the attacks of the black race, which was beginning to invade it in the south of Europe. Unequal was the struggle at the outset, for the whites, half-savage, issuing from their forests and lake-side dwellings, had no other resources than their spears, their bows, and stone-pointed arrows. The blacks had iron weapons, brass armour, the entire resources of an ingenious civilisation and their Cyclopean cities. Defeated from the very outset, the whites, carried away into captivity, were at first made slaves to the blacks,

who forced them to break stones and carry mineral ore to their ovens. All the same, escaped captives brought back into their own land the customs and arts, and fragments of the science, of their conquerors. From the blacks they learned two important things: the casting of metals and sacred writing, *i.e.* the art of fixing certain ideas by means of mysterious and hieroglyphic signs on to the skins of beasts, stone, or the bark of the ash. Thus were discovered the runes of the Celts. Forged and molten metal was the instrument of war; sacred writing was the origin of science and religious tradition. From the Pyrenees to the Caucasus, from the Caucasus to the Himalayas, the struggle raged for many centuries between the white race and the black. Their forests formed the salvation of the whites, for in them they could hide like wild beasts, ready to bound forth when the moment was propitious. From century to century they became more bold and inured to war, until finally they took their revenge, overthrew the cities of the blacks, drove them from the coasts of Europe, and in their turn invaded the north of Africa and Central Asia, then occupied by black tribes.

The mixture of the two races was brought about in two different ways—by peaceful coloni-

sation or by warlike conquest. Fabre d'Olivet, that wonderful seer of the prehistoric past of humanity, starts from this idea in an attempt to throw light on the origin of the so-called Semitic and Aryan nations. Wherever the white colonists submitted to the black nations, accepting their rule and receiving religious initiation from their priests, there, in all probability, appeared the Semitic nations, such as the Egyptians before Menes, Arabs, Phœnicians, Chaldæans and Jews. The Aryan civilisations, on the other hand, were formed where the whites must have ruled over the blacks either by war or by conquest, as, for instance, the Iranians, the Hindus, Greeks and Etruscans. It must be added that, in this naming of the Aryan peoples, we also include all the white nations which remained in a barbarian, nomadic condition in ancient times, such as the Scythians, the Getæ, the Sarmatæ, the Celts, and, later on, the Germanic tribes. This would explain the fundamental diversity of both religion and writing in these two great categories of nations. Among the Semites where the intellectuality of the black race originally dominated, apart from the idolatry of the people, there is to be noticed a tendency to monotheism —the principle of the unity of the concealed,

absolute, and formless God having been one of the essential dogmas of the priests of the black race and of their secret initiation. Among the conquering whites, or those who remained of pure blood, there is noticed, on the contrary, a tendency to polytheism, to mythology, the personification of divinity, springing from their love for nature and their passionate worship of ancestors.

The main difference between the manner of writing of the Semites and that of the Aryans could be explained in like manner. Why do all Semitic nations write from right to left, and all Aryan nations from left to right? The reason given by Fabre d'Olivet is as curious as it is original. It evokes before us a veritable vision of this lost past.

It is well known that in prehistoric times writing was unknown to the masses of the people. This knowledge became spread among them only through phonetic writing, or the art of shaping by means of letters the very sounds of the words. Hieroglyphic writing, however, or the art of representing things by any signs whatever, is as old as human civilisation. In these primitive times it was always the privilege of the priesthood; for it was regarded as something sacred, a religious function, and originally as a divine inspira-

tion. When, in the southern hemisphere, the priests of the black or southern race traced their mysterious signs on skins of beasts or tables of stones, they were in the habit of turning towards the South Pole ; the hand went in the direction of the East, the source of light. Accordingly, they wrote from right to left. The priests of the white or north race learned writing from the black priests, and began by writing like them. But when there had developed in them the sentiment of their origin, along with national consciousness and racial pride, they invented signs of their own, and, instead of turning to the South, the country of the blacks, they faced the North, the country of their ancestors, continuing to write in the direction of the East. Accordingly their characters ran from left to right. Hence the direction of the Celtic runes, of Zend, Sanscrit, Greek, Latin, and all the writings of Aryan races. They run in the direction of the sun, the source of all earthly life ; but they look to the North, land of their ancestors, mysterious source of celestial dawns.

The Semitic and the Aryan currents are the two streams along which all our ideas, mythologies, and religions, our arts, sciences, and philosophies have come to us. Each of these currents bears

with it an opposite conception of life, the reconciliation and balance of which would be truth itself. The Semitic current contains the absolute and higher principles: the idea of unity and universality in the name of one supreme principle, which, in its application, leads to the unification of the human family. The Aryan current contains the idea of ascending evolution in all terrestrial and supra-terrestrial kingdoms, and in its application leads to an infinite diversity of development in the name of the wealth of nature and of the multiple aspirations of the soul. The Semitic genius descends from God to man; the Aryan reascends from man to God. The one is imaged as the justice-loving archangel who descends to earth, armed with the sword and the lightning-bolt; the other as Prometheus, holding in his hand the fire he has stolen from heaven, and encompassing Olympus with his far-reaching gaze.

Both the Semitic and the Aryan genius we bear in ourselves. In turn we think and act under the influence of the one or the other. In our intellectual life, however, they have become entangled, not fused into one. They contradict and combat each other in our inmost feelings and subtlest thoughts as well as in our social life and institutions. Concealed beneath multiple forms which

might be summed up under the generic names of spiritualism and naturalism, they dominate our struggles and our discussions. As both are invincible and irreconcilable, who is to unite them? All the same, the progress and salvation of mankind depend on their synthesis and conciliation. It is for this reason that, in this book, we should like to go back to the very source and birth of the two currents. Beyond the conflicts of history, wars of cults and contradictions of sacred texts, we shall enter into the very consciousness of the founders and prophets who gave religions their initial impulse. These prophets received from above their profound intuition and inspiration, that living light which produces fruitful action. Yes, it was in them that the synthesis previously existed. In their successors the divine ray grows pale and dark, but it reappears and shines afresh every time a prophet, hero, or seer at any period of history returns to the source of his life. For the end can be perceived from the starting point alone; from the radiant sun is witnessed the course of the planets.

Such is revelation in history, as continuous, graduated, and many-formed as is nature, but identical in its origin, one like truth, unchangeable as God.

As we trace back the Semitic current, we come to Moses in Egypt, whose temples, according to Manethon, tradition traces back thirty thousand years. Along the Aryan current we come to India, where was developed the first great civilisation, resulting from the conquest of the white race. India and Egypt were two mighty mothers of religions. They possessed the secret of the great initiation. Into their sanctuaries we will enter.

Their traditions, however, bring us back to an earlier date still, at which both the Aryan and the Semitic genius appear united in pristine innocence and marvellous harmony. This is the primitive Aryan epoch. Thanks to the praiseworthy investigations of modern science, to comparative philology, mythology and ethnology, a glimpse may be obtained into this period. It is traced with patriarchal simplicity and a splendid purity of outline in the Vedic hymns, which, however, form only a reflection of it. A sober, virile age is this, resembling anything rather than the child-like golden age dreamed of by the poets. Grief and struggle are by no means absent from it, but men in those days possessed a confidence, strength, and sagacity they have never since regained.

In India, thought is to become more profound, sentiment more refined. In Greece, passions and

ideas are to be enveloped with the prestige of art and the magic garment of beauty. But there is no poetry which surpasses certain Vedic hymns in moral elevation, in intellectual breadth and height. In them is the feeling of the divine in nature, of the invisible all around, and of the great unity which penetrates the whole.

How did such a civilisation come to birth? How was so lofty an intellectuality developed in the midst of racial wars and the struggle against nature? At this stage the investigations and conjectures of contemporary science can proceed no further. The religious traditions of nations, however, esoterically interpreted, enable us to divine that the first concentration of the Aryan nucleus in Persia came about by a kind of selection, effected in the very heart of the white race under the guidance of a law-making conqueror, who gave his people a religion and law in conformity with the genius of the white race.

Indeed, the sacred book of the Persians, the *Zend-Avesta*, speaks of this legislator of old by the name of Yima, and Zoroaster, when founding a new religion, refers to this predecessor as the first man to whom Ormuzd, the living God, spoke; just as Jesus Christ refers to Moses. The Persian poet, Firdusi, names this same legislator Djem,

the conqueror of the blacks. In the Hindu epic poem, the *Ramayana*, he appears under the name of Rama, in the costume of an Indian king, surrounded with all the splendour of an advanced civilisation ; he keeps, however, his two distinctive characters as initiate and reforming conqueror.

In Egyptian traditions the period of Rama is designated by the reign of Osiris, the lord of light, preceding that of Isis, the queen of mysteries. Finally in Greece the hero, the demi-god of old, was honoured under the name of Dionysus, which comes from the Sanscrit *Deva Nahusha*, the divine renovator. Orpheus even gave this name to the divine Intelligence, and, according to the traditions of Eleusis, Nonnus, the poet, sang of the conquest of India by Dionysus.

Like radii of the same circle, all these traditions point to one common centre. By following the direction they take this centre may be reached. Then, over beyond the India of the Vedas, beyond the Persia of Zoroaster, in the twilight dawn of the white race, there may be seen, issuing from the forests of ancient Scythia, the first creator of the Aryan religion, girt with his double tiara as conqueror and initiate, and bearing in his hand the mystic sacred fire, which is to give light to all the races of the world.

To Fabre d'Olivet is due the honour of having brought back this personage to light[1]; he has cleared the luminous path leading thereto, and, by following the same road myself, I, in turn, will endeavour to call him forth.

[1] *Histoire philosophique du genre humain*, vol. i.

CHAPTER II

THE MISSION OF RAMA

FOUR or five thousand years before our era, dense forests still covered ancient Scythia, which stretched from the Atlantic Ocean to the polar seas. The blacks had called this continent, which they had seen spring into existence, isle after isle, the "wave-born land." What a contrast it made with their white sunburnt soil, this green-covered Europe, with its deep bays and dreamy streams, its sombre lakes and its eternal mists hovering above the mountain sides! In the untilled, grassy plains, broad as the pampas, could be heard scarcely anything but the cries of deer, the roaring of buffaloes, and the untamed galloping of great herds of wild horses as they sped by with flowing mane. The white man who lived in these forests was no longer the cave-man. He could already call himself master of his land, for he had invented knives and hatchets of flint, bows and arrows, slings and nets. Finally he had found two companions in his combats, two

excellent and incomparable friends, devoted unto death—the dog and the horse. The domestic dog, in becoming the faithful guardian of his wooden hut, had given him a feeling of security for his home. By taming the horse he had conquered the earth, subjected the rest of the animal creation to his sway, and become lord of space. Mounting their tawny horses, these red-haired men wheeled round and round like fiery flashes of lightning. They struck to earth the bear, the wolf, and the ure-ox, and filled with terror the panther and the lion, which in those early days prowled about our forests.

Civilisation had begun ; the rudimentary family, the clan and tribe were in existence. Everywhere the Scythians, sons of the Hyperboreans, raised monstrous *menhirs* to their ancestors.

When a chieftain died, his armour and horse were buried with him, so that the warrior, it was said, might ride the clouds and hunt the fire-dragon in the other world. Hence the custom of sacrificing the horse, which plays so important a *rôle* in the Vedas and among Scandinavian races. Religion thus began by the worship of ancestors.

The Semites found the one God, the universal Spirit, in the wilderness, on the tops of the

mountains, in the immensity of stellar space. The Scythians and Celts found the Gods, the multiple spirits, in the depths of their woods. There they heard voices and obtained the first faint glimpses of the Invisible, visions of the Beyond. This is the reason the forest depths, whether terrifying or enchanting, have remained dear to the white race. Attracted by the rustle of the leaves and the magic of the moon, they always come back to them, as the ages roll along, as to a spring of perennial youth, the temple of the great mother—the goddess Hertha. In them slumber their gods and loves, their long-lost mysteries.

In the most distant ages women seers prophesied beneath the trees. Each tribe had its great prophetess, like the Voluspa of the Scandinavians, and its college of druidesses. These women, however, at first filled with noble inspiration, had become ambitious and cruel. The kindly-disposed prophetesses had changed into maleficent magicians. They instituted human sacrifices, and the blood of the *herolls* never ceased flowing on the cromlechs, to the sinister chants of the priests, and the shouts and acclamations of the cruel, ferocious Scythians.

Among these priests was a young man in the prime of life, named Ram. Though destined to

enter the ranks of the priesthood, his contemplative, thoughtful mind revolted against this blood-stained worship.

The young druid was grave and gentle in disposition. He had at an early age shown a singular leaning towards a knowledge of plants, their wonderful virtues, and distilled, prepared juices, and quite as marked a tendency towards the study of the stars and their influences. He seemed to divine and actually to see things at a distance. Hence his precocious influence over the oldest among the druids. From his words —from his whole being—there emanated mingled greatness and benevolence. His wisdom formed a strange contrast with the folly of the druidesses, who shrieked out curses and uttered their ill-omened oracles in delirious convulsions. The druids had called him "the one who knows"; the people gave him the title of "the peace-inspired one."

All the same, Ram, who was ardently seeking after divine knowledge, had travelled throughout the whole of Scythia and the countries of the south. Won over by his personal knowledge and his modesty, the priests of the blacks had communicated to him a portion of their secret knowledge. On his return to the countries of the north,

Ram was amazed to find the worship of human sacrifices raging more and more among his people. He saw that this meant the ruin of his race. But how was he to combat a custom kept alive by the pride of the druidesses, the ambition of the druids, and the superstition of the people? Then another plague fell upon the whites, in which Ram believed he saw punishment from heaven falling on the sacrilegious cult. From their incursions into the countries of the south and their contact with the blacks, the whites had brought back a terrible disease, a kind of pestilence. It tainted and poisoned the blood, the very fountain of life. The whole body became covered with black spots, and the breath foul and tainted; the limbs, swollen and eaten away with ulcers, lost their wonted shape, and the sick man expired in terrible agony. Both the breath of the living and the odour of the dead helped to propagate the plague. Horror-stricken the whites died by thousands in their forests, which were now forsaken, even by birds of prey. Ram, in his sorrow and trouble, sought in vain for some way of saving the people.

It was a habit of his to meditate within a quiet glade at the foot of an oak-tree. One evening, after reflecting for a long time on the evils befalling

his race, he fell asleep at the foot of the tree. In his slumber he seemed to hear a loud voice calling him by name, and he imagined that he awoke. Then he saw standing before him a man of majestic build, clothed, like himself, with the white robe of the druids. He was carrying a wand round which a serpent was entwined. Astonished, Ram was on the point of asking the stranger what this meant, when the latter, taking him by the hand, raised him to his feet and showed him a beautiful branch of mistletoe on the very tree at whose foot he had been sleeping. "O Ram!" he said, "here is the remedy thou seekest." Then he drew from his bosom a small golden pruning-knife, cut off the branch and gave it to him. After murmuring a few words regarding the method of preparing the mistletoe, he disappeared.

Then Ram awoke and felt greatly comforted. A voice within told him that he had found salvation for the people, and he failed not to prepare the mistletoe according to the directions of the divine friend who bore the golden sickle. He gave a sick man the beverage to drink in some fermented liquor, and he was healed. The wonderful cures effected in this way made Ram famous throughout the whole of Scythia. He

was summoned everywhere to heal the sick. On being consulted by the druids of his tribe, he informed them of his discovery, adding that it was to remain the secret of the priestly caste, in order to insure its authority. The disciples of Ram travelled throughout Scythia, carrying with them branches of mistletoe. They were looked upon as divine messengers and their master as a demi-god.

This event was the origin of a new cult. From that time the mistletoe became a sacred plant. Ram consecrated its memory by instituting Nöel, Christmas, or the new salvation, which he set at the beginning of the year, and called the Night-Mother (of the new sun) or the great renovation. As for the mysterious being Ram had seen in the vision, and who had shown him the mistletoe, he was called, according to the esoteric tradition of the whites of Europe, *Aesc-heyl-hopa*, which means "the hope of healing (or salvation) is in the wood." The Greeks called him Asclepios, the genius of medicine, and he is represented as bearing in his hand the magic wand under the form of a caduceus.

Nevertheless Ram, "the peace-inspired one," had wider aspirations. He wished to heal his people of a moral scourge which was even worse

than pestilence. Being appointed chief of the priests of his tribe, he sent forth the order to all the colleges of druids and druidesses to put an end to human sacrifices. The command went right to the ocean, being joyfully welcomed by some and regarded as an outrageous sacrilege by others. The druidesses, whose power was threatened, began to utter curses against the bold innovator, to thunder out death sentences on his devoted head. Many of the druids, who saw their only means of power in human sacrifices, arrayed themselves on their side. Ram, extolled by one mighty party, was execrated by the other. Instead of bending before the storm, however, he increased it by proclaiming a new symbol.

At that time each white tribe had its rallying sign in the form of an animal, symbolising its favourite qualities. Some of the chiefs nailed cranes, eagles, and vultures, others the heads of boars and buffaloes, on to the timber-work of their wooden palaces ; the origin of the coat-of-arms. Now, the favourite standard of the Scythians was the bull, which they called Thor, the sign of brute force and violence. Against the bull, Ram set up the ram, the courageous and peace-loving head of the flock, making of it the rallying sign of all his followers. This standard,

erected in the centre of Scythia, became the signal for a general upheaval, a veritable revolution in the people's minds. The white nations were divided into two camps. The very soul of the race split in two, in order to free itself from rampant animality and mount the first step of the invisible sanctuary leading to divine humanity. "Death to the ram!" exclaimed the partisans of Thor. "War on the bull!" replied the friends of Ram. A formidable conflict was imminent.

Before such a possibility Ram hesitated. Would he not be increasing the evil and forcing his race to destroy itself, were he to let loose the hounds of war? At this stage he had another dream.

The stormy sky was heavy with black clouds, galloping over the mountains and sweeping the wind-tossed tops of the trees in their flight. Standing on a rock was a woman, her hair streaming in disarray down her back, on the point of striking to the ground a proud strong warrior, lying bound before her. "In the name of the Ancestors, stop!" exclaimed Ram, springing forth. The druidess stood up against her opponent, giving him a piercing glance, sharp as the point of a dagger. The thunder rolled along the heavy clouds, and there, in a flash

of lightning, appeared a dazzling form. The forest became pale, the druidess fell, struck to the ground, and the chains of the captive being now broken, he turned his eyes on the shining giant with a gesture of defiance. Ram trembled not, for in the features of the vision he recognised the divine being who had already spoken to him beneath the oak. This time he seemed to him more beautiful, for the whole of his body shone with light. Ram saw that he was in an open, wide-columned temple. On the spot where the sacrificial stone had been, there now rose an altar. Close by stood the warrior, whose eyes still shot forth a challenge against death. The woman lay there on the stone floor, apparently dead. The celestial genius, bearing a torch in his right hand and a goblet in his left, smiled benevolently, and said: "I am well pleased with thee, Ram. Dost thou see this torch? It is the sacred fire of the divine Spirit. And this goblet? It is the goblet of Life and Love. Give the torch to the man and the goblet to the woman." Ram did as his genius commanded. No sooner was the torch in the hands of the man and the goblet in those of the woman than the fire lit of itself on the altar, and in its light they both shone forth transfigured as the divine Bridegroom and Bride.

At the same time the temple increased in grandeur and size ; its columns ascended to heaven, and its vault became the firmament. Then Ram, carried away by his dream, saw himself transported to the summit of a mountain beneath the starry sky. Standing by his side, his genius explained the meaning of the constellations and enabled him to read the destiny of mankind in the flaming signs of the zodiac.

"Marvellous Spirit, who art thou?" said Rama to his genius. The genius replied: "I am called Deva Nahusha, divine Intelligence. Thou shalt shed the beam of my light over the earth, and I will always come at thy call. Now, go thy way!" And the genius raised his hand, and pointed in the direction of the East.

CHAPTER III

THE EXODUS AND THE CONQUEST

In this dream Ram saw, as though by a lightning flash, his mission and the great destiny of his race. He hesitated no longer. Instead of kindling war between the tribes of Europe, he determined to lead away the *élite* of his race into the very heart of Asia. He announced to his friends that he would institute the worship of the sacred fire, which would compass the happiness of mankind; that human sacrifices should be for ever abolished; that the Ancestors should no longer be invoked by bloodthirsty priestesses on wild rocks and crags dripping with human gore, but on every hearth, by husband and wife joining in one common prayer, one hymn of worship, close by the purifying fire. Yes, the visible fire of the altar—symbol and guide of the invisible fire of heaven—should unite family, clan, tribe, and all the nations; for it would be on earth a centre of the living God. To reap such a harvest, however, the wheat must be separated from the tares,

and every one who had the courage must prepare to leave Europe and conquer a new land, a virgin soil. There he would establish his laws and found the cult of the purifying fire.

This proposition was enthusiastically received by a nation which was young and eager for adventure. Fires, kept lit for several months on the mountains, were the signal for the emigration *en masse* of all who wished to follow the Ram. The formidable emigration, directed by this great shepherd of the people, was gradually set in motion and made its way towards the centre of Asia. Along the Caucasus it had to capture several Cyclopean fortresses of the blacks. In memory of these victories, the white colonies later on carved gigantic rams' heads in the rocks of the Caucasus. Ram proved himself worthy of his lofty mission. He smoothed all difficulties, read people's thoughts, and foresaw the future; he healed the sick, put down revolts, and raised the courage of all. Thus the powers of heaven we call Providence willed the domination of the northern race throughout the world, and, by means of the genius of Ram, cast beams of light upon its path. This race had already had its inspired ones to rescue it from a state of savagery. But Ram, the first to conceive of social law as

an expression of divine law, was a direct initiate and one of the first rank.

He made friends with the Turanians, old Scythian tribes with an admixture of yellow blood who occupied Upper Asia, and carried them off to the conquest of Persia, out of which he completely drove the blacks, for he wished a people of pure white race to inhabit the centre of Asia and become an arena of light for all the rest. There he founded Ver—"a splendid city," Zoroaster called it. He taught them to till the ground and plant seeds; he was the father of corn and the vine. Castes he created according to occupation, dividing the people into priests, warriors, artisans, and tillers of the land. At first there was no rivalry in the castes; the hereditary privilege, a source of hatred and jealousy, was not introduced until a later date. He forbade slavery as strongly as murder, affirming that the subjection of man by man was the origin of all evils. As for the clan, the primitive grouping of the white race, he kept it as it was and allowed it to choose its own chiefs and judges.

Ram's great work, the civilising instrument *par excellence* which he created, was the new *rôle* he gave to woman. Hitherto man had known woman only in a double aspect, either as the

wretched slave of his hut, whom he brutally ill-treated and kept in subjection, or as the disturbing priestess of the oak and the rock, whose favours he sought. In spite of himself, she dominated him, for she was a fascinating and terrible magician, whose oracles he dreaded, before whom his superstitious soul trembled with terror. The human sacrifice was the woman's revenge on man, when she plunged her knife into the heart of her fierce tyrant. By proscribing this frightful cult and raising woman in man's eyes with reference to her divine functions as mother and wife, Ram made her the priestess of the hearth, guardian of the sacred fire, invoking with her husband, as his equal, the soul of the Ancestors.

Like all great legislators then Ram developed the superior instincts of his race by organising them. To adorn and embellish life, he appointed four great festivals during the course of the year. The first was that of spring or generation ; it was consecrated to the love of bridegroom and bride. That of summer or of the harvest belonged to the sons and daughters, who offered to their parents the sheaves they had garnered. The autumn festival was in honour of the fathers and mothers, who then

gave fruit to their children, in token of rejoicing. The most sacred and mysterious of all was that of Yule-tide, or the great seed-sowing. This Ram consecrated to new-born children, to the offspring of love conceived in spring-time, and to the souls of the dead—the Ancestors. A union of the visible with the invisible, this religious solemnity formed at once the farewell to souls that had departed, and mystic salvation to those which return to be incarnated in mothers and born again in children. On that holy night the Aryans of old met in the sanctuaries of the Aïryana-Vaeïa, as they had formerly done in their forests. With torch and song they celebrated the return of the terrestrial and solar year, the germination of Nature in the depth of winter, the thrill of life in the midst of death. They chanted the universal kiss that heaven gives to earth and the triumphant birth of the new Sun from the mighty Night-Mother.

In this way Ram linked the life of mankind with the cycle of the seasons, the revolutions of the constellations. At the same time he brought out its divine meaning. Because he founded such fruitful institutions, Zoroaster called him "the chief of the nations, the blessed monarch." This is why Valmiki, the Hindu poet, who brings

down the hero of old to a much more recent period, amid all the luxury of an advanced civilisation, gives us so lofty an ideal of him. "Rama, with his lotus-blue eyes," says Valmiki, "was the lord of the world, the master of its soul and the love of men, the father and mother of his subjects. *He bound all beings with the chain of love.*"

Established in Persia, at the foot of the Himalayas, the white race was not yet mistress of the world. Its vanguard had still to penetrate into India, the principal centre of the blacks, former conquerors of the red and yellow races. The *Zend-Avesta* speaks of this march into India; the Hindu epopee makes it one of its favourite themes.[1] Rama was the conqueror of the land

[1] It is remarkable that the *Zend-Avesta*, the sacred book of the Parsees, whilst considering Zoroaster to be inspired by Ormuzd and the prophet of the law of God, at the same time states that he is the successor of a prophet far more ancient. Beneath the symbolism of the temples of old may be found the thread of that great revelation to humanity which binds true initiates to one another. The following is an important passage:—

"1. Zarathustra (Zoroaster) asked of Ahura-Mazda (Ormuzd, the God of light): Ahura-Mazda, holy and sacred creator of all corporeal beings, exceeding pure;

"2. Who was the first man with whom thou didst hold converse, thou who art Ahura-Mazda? . . .

"4. Then Ahura-Mazda replied: 'With beautiful Yima, who was at the head of a company worthy of all praise, O pure Zarathustra.' . . .

"13. And I said to him: 'Watch over the worlds that are mine make them fertile in thy capacity as protector.' . . .

enclosed by the Himavat, the abode of elephants, tigers, and gazelles. He commanded the first attack in this gigantic struggle, in which two races were unconsciously disputing for the sceptre of the world. The poetical tradition of India, going beyond the occult traditions of the temples, makes of it the struggle between black and white magic. In the war against the peoples and kings of the country of the Djambous, Ram, as he was then called, or Rama, as the Orientals called him, employed methods apparently miraculous, because they are beyond the ordinary powers of humanity; methods which great initiates owe to the knowledge and manipulation of the hidden forces of Nature. Tradition at one time represents him as causing a spring of water to gush forth in the desert; at another finding unexpected qualities in a kind of manna, of which he taught his followers the use; then again, causing an epidemic to cease by means of a plant called *hom*, the *amomos* of the Greeks, the *persea* of the Egyptians, from which

"17. And I brought him the arms of victory, I, who am Ahura-Mazda:

"18. A lance and a spear of gold. . . .

"31. Then Yima rose to the stars in the south on the path of the sun. . . .

"37. He proceeded over this earth which he had made fertile. It was one-third larger than before. . . .

"43. And the shining Yima assembled the most virtuous men in the famous Airyana-Vaeïa, pure-created."— *Vendidad-Sadé, 2nd Fargard.*

he extracted a health-giving juice. This plant became sacred in the eyes of his followers, and replaced the mistletoe of the oak, which has been retained by the Celts of Europe.

Rama made use of all kinds of magic spells against his enemies. The priests of the blacks no longer reigned except by the most unworthy of cults. In their temples they were in the habit of feeding and tending enormous serpents and pterodactyls, rare survivals of antediluvian animals, which terrified the masses of the people, who were made to worship them as gods. They gave these serpents the flesh of prisoners to eat. Rama would sometimes appear unexpectedly in these temples with torches in his hands, driving away and filling with terrified awe both priests and serpents. Then again, he would appear in the enemy's camp, exposing himself unarmed in the presence of those who sought after his death, and depart without any one daring to touch him. When those who had allowed him to escape were questioned, they replied that, when they met his gaze, they had felt petrified with fear ; or else, whilst he was speaking, a mountain of brass had come between them and they had ceased to see him. Finally, to crown his work, the epic tradition of India attributes to Rama the conquest of Ceylon, the final refuge of

the black magician Ravana, on whom the white magician rained down a hail of fire, after flinging a bridge over an arm of the sea, aided by an army of apes, resembling some primitive tribe of bimane savages filled with zeal and enthusiasm by this mighty charmer of the nations.

CHAPTER IV

THE TESTAMENT OF THE GREAT ANCESTOR

By his might, his genius, and his kindness, say the sacred books of the East, Rama had become master of India and spiritual king of the earth. Priests, kings, and nations bowed down before him as before a heavenly benefactor. Under the sign of the ram his emissaries spread afar the Aryan law which proclaimed equality between victors and vanquished, the abolition of human sacrifices and of slavery, the respect for woman in the home, ancestral worship, and the institution of the sacred fire, the visible symbol of the nameless God.

Rama had grown old; his beard was now white as snow, but strength had not left his body, and the majesty of the high priests of truth adorned his brow. The kings and envoys of the nations offered him supreme power. He asked permission to reflect on the matter for a whole year, and again he had a dream. The genius who inspired him spoke to him in his sleep.

He appeared to be once more in the forests of his youthful days. He was again young, and wore the linen robe of the Druids. The moon was shining. It was the holy night, the Night-Mother, when the nations await the rebirth of both sun and year. Rama was walking beneath the oaks, listening, as he was wont to do long ago, to the voices of the forest calling to him. A beautiful woman appeared before him wearing a magnificent crown. Her fawn-coloured hair shone like gold, her skin was white as snow, whilst the glorious depths of her eyes were blue as the azure vault of heaven after a storm. She said to him: "I was the wild druidess, and now I have become thy radiant spouse. My name is Sita. I am woman glorified by thee. I am the white race, thy bride. Oh, my master and king! Was it not for me that thou didst cross rivers, charm nations, and depose kings? Here is thy reward. Take this crown from my hand, place it on thy head, and reign with me over the world!" In humble, submissive attitude she had knelt down offering Rama the empire of the earth. Her precious gems flashed forth a thousand rays, and the mad frenzy of love smiled in the woman's eyes. The soul of the great Rama, the shepherd of the nations, was stirred by the sight. Suddenly there

appeared before him Deva Nahusha, his genius, above the forest trees saying: "If thou placest this crown on thy head, divine Intelligence will depart from thee; thou wilt behold me no more. If thou takest this woman to thy arms, she will die of thy happiness. But if thou renouncest possession of her, she will live on earth, happy and free, and thy invisible spirit will reign over her. Choose: either to listen to her or to follow me." Sita, still kneeling before her master, her eyes brimming over with love, awaited the reply in suppliant attitude. For a moment Rama was silent. His eyes, fastened on those of Sita, measured the abyss separating complete possession from an eternal adieu. Then, feeling supreme love to be supreme renunciation, he placed his liberating hand on the forehead of the white woman, and said as he blessed her: "Adieu! Be free, and do not forget me!" Immediately the woman disappeared like a lunar phantom. Newborn Dawn waved her magic wand over the ancient forest. The king had become old once again. Tears trickled down his white beard, and from the depths of the wood a sad voice was heard calling: "Rama! Rama!"

Then Deva Nahusha, the genius, resplendent with light, called out: "Come to me!" And

the divine Spirit carried off Rama to the summit of a mountain on the north of the Himalayas.

After this dream, informing him that his mission was accomplished, Rama gathered together the kings and envoys of the peoples and said to them: "I have no desire for the supreme power you offer me. Keep your crowns and observe my laws. My task is now over, and I must withdraw for ever with my brother initiates to the summit of a mountain of the Aïryana-Vaeïa. There I shall guard and protect you. Keep watch over the divine fire! Were it by any chance to die out, I should come back to you as a terrible judge and avenger!" Thereupon he withdrew with his disciples to a retreat known to initiates alone, on Mount Albori, between Balk and Bamyan. Here he taught his followers what he knew of the secrets of the earth and of the great Being. They went into distant lands, to Egypt and even to Occitania, bearing the sacred fire, symbol of the divine unity of things, and the horns of the ram, emblem of the Aryan religion. These horns became the insignia of initiation and consequently of sacerdotal and regal power.[1] From afar Rama

[1] Ram's horns are found on the heads of many persons in Egyptian monuments. This head-dress of kings and high priests is the sign of sacerdotal and regal initiation. It is the origin of the two horns of the papal tiara.

continued to watch over his people and the white race so dear to him. The last few years of his life were spent in establishing the calendar of the Aryans. It is to him we are indebted for the signs of the zodiac. This was the testament of the patriarch of the initiates—a strange book, written with stars, in celestial hieroglyphs, on the fathomless, boundless firmament, by the Ancient of Days of our race. In establishing the twelve signs of the zodiac Rama attributed to them a threefold meaning. The first related to the influence of the sun during the twelve months of the year; the second related, in some way, his own history; whilst the third indicated the occult methods he made use of to attain his object. This is the reason these signs, when read in the inverse order, become later on the secret emblems of progressive initiation.[1] He ordered his disciples

[1] The following is the manner in which the signs of the zodiac represent the history of Ram, according to Fabre d'Olivet, that great thinker who was able to interpret the symbols of the past esoterically: 1. *The Ram*, fleeing with its head turned backwards, indicates the situation of Rama, when leaving his fatherland, his eyes fixed on the country he is quitting. 2. *The Bull* violently opposes his progress, but the half of his body, plunged in slime and mud, prevents him from following out his plan; he falls on his knees. This represents the Celts—as is shown by their own symbol—who, in spite of their efforts, finally submit. 3. *The Heavenly Twins* indicate the alliance made between Rama and the Turanians. 4. *The Crab*, his meditations and self-examinations. 5. *The Lion*, his battles against his enemies. 6. *The winged Virgin*, victory. 7. *The Scales*, equality between victors

to conceal his death and continue his work by perpetuating their fraternity. For centuries the nations believed that Rama, wearing the tiara with its ram's horns, was still living in his holy mountain. In Vedic times the Great-Ancestor became Yama, the judge of the dead, the Hermes psychopompos of the Hindus.

and vanquished. 8. *The Scorpion*, revolt and treason. 9. *The Archer*, the revenge he obtains therefrom. 10. *The He-goat;* 11. *The Water-bearer;* and 12. *The Fish*, refer to the moral part of his history. This explanation of the zodiac may be regarded as audacious as it is strange. Still, up to the present, no astronomer or mythologist has, after such a lapse of time, explained to us either the origin or the meaning of these mysterious signs on the chart of heaven, adopted and revered by many peoples and nations since the beginning of our Aryan cycle. The hypothesis of Fabre d'Olivet has at any rate the merit of opening out before the mind's eye new and vast perspectives. I have already said that these signs, when read in the inverse order later on in Greece and the East, marked the different stages to be mounted in order to attain to supreme initiation. I will refer merely to the best known of these emblems: The *winged Virgin* signified the chastity which gives victory; the *Lion*, moral strength; the *Heavenly Twins*, the union of a man and a divine spirit, who together form two invincible wrestlers; the *Bull*, now tamed, mastery over Nature; the *Ram*, the asterism or constellation of Fire or of the universal Spirit, conferring supreme initiation by the knowledge of Truth.

CHAPTER V

THE VEDIC RELIGION

By his organising genius the great initiator of the Aryans had established in the centre of Asia, in Iran, a people, a living society, which was destined to spread in every direction. Colonies of the primitive Aryans spread throughout Asia and Europe, introducing everywhere their customs, cults and gods. Of all these colonies, the branch of the Aryans of India forms the nearest approach to the primitive Aryans.

The Vedas, the sacred books of the Hindus, have a threefold value for us. First, they bring us to the very origin of the ancient undefiled Aryan religion which has given us the Vedic hymns ; then they offer us the key to India ; finally, they show us the first crystallisation of the root ideas of esoteric teaching and of all the Aryan religions.[1]

[1] The Brahmans looked upon the Vedas as their sacred books *par excellence*. In them they found the science of sciences. The very word *Veda* means *knowledge*. A kind of fascination has rightly attracted the savants of Europe to these texts. At first they saw

Let us limit ourselves to a brief outline both of the shell and of the kernel of the Vedic religion.

Nothing could be simpler or grander than this religion wherein profound naturalism is allied with the most transcendent spiritualism. Before day-break a man, head of the family, is standing in front of an altar of earth on which the fire, kindled with two pieces of wood, is burning. By his very function this chief is at the same time father, priest, and king of the sacrifice. Whilst Aurora is removing her veil, "like a woman leaving her bath, after weaving her most beautiful robe," says a Vedic poet, the chief utters a prayer, an invocation to Usha (the Dawn), to Savitri (the Sun), and to the Asuras (spirits of life). The mother and sons pour out the fermented liquor of the asclepia, *soma*, into *Agni*, the fire. The leaping flame carries away to the invisible gods the purified prayer as it rises from the lips of the patriarch and the heart of the family.

The state of soul manifested by the Vedic poet

nothing in them except patriarchal poetry; then they discovered not only the origin of the great Indo-European myths and of our classic gods, but also a cleverly organised cult, a profoundly religious and metaphysical system (see Bergaigne, *La Religion des Védas*, and also the fine, illuminative work of M. Auguste Barth, *Les Religions de l'Inde*). It may be that the future is reserving for us a final surprise, that of discovering in the Vedas the definition of the occult forces of Nature which modern science is on the point of rediscovering.

is alike far distant from Hellenic sensualism (I am speaking of the popular cults of Greece, not of the doctrine of the Greek initiates), which represents the cosmic gods as possessed of handsome human bodies, and from the Judaic monotheism which worships the formless, omnipresent Eternal. In the mind of the Vedic poet Nature resembles a transparent veil behind which move imponderable, divine forces. It is these forces he invokes, worships, and personifies, without, however, being the victim of his metaphors. To him Savitri is not so much the sun as Vivasvat, the creative power of life which animates it and brings into being the Solar system. Indra, the divine warrior, who crosses the heavens in his golden chariot, hurls the thunder-bolt and rends the clouds asunder, personifies the power of this same sun in atmospheric life, in "the mighty transparency of the air." When they invoke Varuna (the Ouranos of the Greeks), the god of the immense luminous heaven which embraces all things, the Vedic poets rise still higher. "If Indra represents the active militant life of the sky, Varuna represents its unchanging majesty. There is nothing to equal the magnificent description given of him in the hymns. The sun is his eye, the heaven his garment, the tempest his breath. He

it is who established heaven and earth on foundations that cannot be shaken, and who keeps them separate and distinct. He has made, and now preserves, everything in its place. Nothing could injure the works of Varuna. None can approach him, but he knows and sees all that is and that will be. From the heights of heaven, where he dwells in a palace, approached by a thousand gates, he distinguishes the flight of birds through the air, the course of the vessels as they plough through the waves. From his golden throne, with its foundations of brass, he looks down and judges the deeds of men. He maintains order throughout the universe and in human society; he punishes the guilty, but is full of compassion to the repentant sinner. To him rises the despairing cry of remorse; before him the guilty man unburdens himself of the weight of his sin. In other directions the Vedic religion is ritualistic, at times highly speculative. With Varuna it descends into the depths of consciousness and realises the notion of holiness."[1] Let us add, that it rises to the pure idea of the one God, who enters into and rules the great All.

All the same, the magnificent images these hymns roll out before us in broad, sounding

[1] A. Barth, *Les Religions de l'Inde.*

waves show us nothing but the outer covering of the Vedas. With the idea of Agni, the divine fire, we touch the very heart of the doctrine, its transcendent esoteric foundation. In fact, Agni is the cosmic agent, the universal principle *par excellence*. "He is not only the terrestrial fire of sun and lightning; his real home is the mystic, invisible heaven, sojourn of eternal light, and of the first principles of all things. His births are infinite; whether he leap forth from the piece of wood in which he sleeps, like the embryo in the womb, or as 'Son of the Waves,' with the sound of thunder, he bursts from celestial rivers where the Aswins (heavenly horsemen) engendered him. He is the oldest of the gods, pontiff in heaven as on earth, and he officiated in the dwelling of Vivaswat (heaven or sun) long before Matariswan (lightning) brought him to mortals, and Atharvan and the Angiras, sacrificers of old, appointed him protector, host, and friend of mankind. Lord and generator of sacrifice, Agni becomes the bearer of all mystic speculations of which sacrifice is the object. *He begets the gods,* organises the world, produces and preserves the life of the universe; in a word, *he is cosmogonic power.*

"Soma is the counterpart of Agni; in reality,

it is the potion from a fermented plant poured out as an offering to the gods in sacrifice. Like Agni, it has a mystical existence. Its supreme abode is in the depths of the third heaven, where Surya, the daughter of the sun, filtered it, and Pushan, the foster-god, found it. From there the Falcon, a symbol of the lightning, or Agni himself stole it from the celestial Archer, the Gandharva, its guardian, and brought it to men. The gods drank it and became immortal, as men will become in turn when they drink it with Yama in the abode of the blessed. Meanwhile it gives them in this life strength and fulness of days ; it is both ambrosia and the water of eternal youth. It feeds and penetrates plants, vivifies the seed of animals, and gives aspiration to prayer. *The soul of heaven and earth, of Indra and of Vishnu, it forms along with Agni an inseparable couple, which gave light to the sun and to the stars.*" [1]

The notion of Agni and of Soma contains the two essential principles of the universe, according to both esoteric teaching and every living philosophy. Agni is the *Eternal-Masculine*, creative Intellect, pure Spirit ; Soma, the *Eternal-Feminine*, the soul of the world of ethereal substance, womb of all worlds, visible and invisible to mortal

[1] A. Barth, *Les Religions de l'Inde.*

sight—in a word, Nature, or subtile matter in its endless transformations.[1] Now the perfect union of these two beings constitutes the supreme Being, the essence of God.

From these two principal ideas springs a third, no less fruitful than the others. The Vedas look upon *the cosmogonic act as a perpetual sacrifice.* To produce all that exists the supreme Being immolates himself, divides himself to depart from his unity. This sacrifice is accordingly regarded as the vital point of every function in Nature. This idea, at first so surprising, though extremely profound on reflection, contains the germ of the whole theosophical teaching on the evolution of God in the world, the esoteric synthesis of both polytheism and monotheism. It is to give birth to the Dionysiac doctrine of the fall and the redemption of souls, which will expand and grow in Hermes and Orpheus. From that will spring into being the teaching of the divine Word proclaimed by Krishna, the Logos fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

Sacrifice by fire, with its ceremonies and

[1] What proves beyond the slightest doubt that *Soma* represented the absolute feminine principle is the fact that the Brahmans later on identified it with the moon. Now the moon symbolises the feminine principle in all ancient religions, just as the sun symbolises the masculine principle.

prayers, the immutable centre of the Vedic cult, thus becomes the image of this great cosmogonic act. The Vedas attach the utmost importance to the prayer, the formula of invocation accompanying the sacrifice. For this reason they make prayer unto a goddess, Brahmanaspati. Faith in the evoking and creative power of the human word, accompanied by the mighty urge of the soul or an intense projection of the will, is the origin of all cults, the reason of the Egyptian and Chaldean doctrine of magic. The Vedic and Brahmanic priest believed that the Asuras, the invisible lords, and the Pitris, or souls of the ancestors, sat around on the turf during the sacrifice, attracted by fire, song and prayer. The science relating to this aspect of the cult is that of the hierarchy of spirits of every order.

The immortality of the soul is affirmed as loftily and clearly as possible in the Vedas. "There is an immortal part of man; this it is, O Agni, that thou must warm with thy rays, enflame with thy fire. O Jatavedas, carry it across to the world of the godly in the glorified body thou hast formed. . . ." The Vedic poets not only indicate the destiny of the soul; they also concern themselves with its origin. "Where

is the soul born? There are some which come to us and return, which return and come back again." Here we have in a single sentence the whole doctrine of reincarnation, which is to play so large a part in Brahmanism and Buddhism, among the Egyptians and the followers of Orpheus, in the philosophy of Pythagoras and Plato, for it is the mystery of mysteries, the secret of secrets.

After this how can one help recognising in the Vedas the main lines of an organic religious system, a philosophical conception of the universe? Here we have not only profound intuition into intellectual truths, anterior and superior to observation, but, in addition, unity and breadth of view in the understanding of Nature and the co-ordination of her phenomena. Like a beautiful rock crystal, the consciousness of the Vedic poet reflects the sun of eternal truth, and in this brilliant prism already shine all the beams of a world-wide theosophy. The principles of the permanent teaching are even more visible here than in the other sacred books of India and the other Semitic or Aryan religions, by reason of the singular candour of the Vedic poets and the lofty pure transparency of this primitive religion. At this period no distinction

existed between the mysteries and the popular worship. On attentively reading the Vedas, however, behind the father of the family or the poet officiating over the hymns, there may already be seen another and a more important personage, the *rishi*, the initiate sage from whom he has received the truth. It is also seen that this truth has been transmitted by uninterrupted tradition which goes back to the very origin of the Aryan race.

So now we have the Aryan people launched forth on its conquering and civilising career all along the Indus and the Ganges. Deva Nahusha, the invisible genius of Rama, the intelligence of divine things, reigns over it, and Agni, the sacred fire, flows through its veins. A dewy dawn encircles this age, so youthful, strong, and virile. The family is now constituted, and woman an object of respect. Priestess at the hearth, she sometimes composes and sings the hymns herself. "May the husband of this wife live a hundred autumns!" says a poet. They love the present life, but also believe in the life beyond. The king lives in a castle on the small eminence which looks down upon the village. In war he mounts a glowing chariot, clad in glittering armour and wearing a tiara on his head; he shines like the god Indra.

Later on, when the Brahmans have firmly established their authority, there will be seen, rising near the glorious palace of the *Maharaja*, or great king, the stone pagoda, from which will issue divine art, poetry, and drama, imitated and sung by sacred dancing girls. For the time being, castes exist, though they have no absolute, no hard and fast, rules. The warrior is a priest and the priest a warrior, or, more frequently, officiating servant of the chief or the king.

And now we are presented with a person, poor in appearance though with a mighty future before him. With unkempt hair and beard, half-naked, covered with red rags, this solitary *muni* lives near the sacred lakes, in wild fastnesses, where he gives himself up to meditation and the ascetic life. He shows himself from time to time, coming to admonish king or chief. Often is he sent away and disobeyed, though everywhere he is respected and feared. Already the power he wields is a formidable one.

Desperate and long will be the struggle between this king on his golden chariot, surrounded by his warriors on every hand, and the *muni*, almost naked, whose only armour consists of his thoughts, words, and looks. And the redoubtable con-

queror will not be the king ; it will be the solitary hermit, the thin, wasted mendicant, for with him will be knowledge and the might of will.

The history of this struggle is the history of Brahmanism itself, just as, later on, it is that of Buddhism ; in it almost the whole of the history of India is summed up.

KRISHNA

(INDIA AND THE BRAHMANIC INITIATION)

He who is ceaselessly creating the worlds is threefold. He is Brahma, the Father; Mâyâ, the Mother; and Vishnou, the Son: Essence, Substance, Life. Each contains the two others, and all three are one in the Ineffable.—*Brahmanic Doctrine: The Upanishads.*

Within thyself thou hast a sublime friend thou knowest not. God dwells within all men, though few know how to find Him. The man who sacrifices his desires and works to the Being whence proceed the principles of all things, and by whom the universe has been formed, attains to perfection by such sacrifice. For he who finds in himself his happiness, his joy and light, is one with God. Know then, that the soul which has found God is freed from re-birth and from death, from old age and from pain; such a soul drinks the waters of immortality.—*Bhagavad-Gita.*

CHAPTER I

HEROIC INDIA—THE SONS OF THE SUN AND OF THE MOON

FROM the conquest of India by the Aryans sprang one of the most brilliant civilisations this earth has ever known. The Ganges and its tributaries saw the birth of mighty empires and immense capitals, such as Ayodhya, Hastinapoura and Indraprastha. The epic accounts of the Mahâbhârata, and the popular cosmogonies of the Pouranas, which contain the most ancient historical records of India, speak in gorgeous language of the royal opulence, the heroic grandeur, and the chivalrous spirit belonging to these bygone ages. Nothing more haughty, nor anything more noble, could be conceived than one of these Aryan kings of India, standing in his war-chariot, and controlling armies of elephants, horses, and foot-soldiers. A Vedic priest consecrates his king before the assembled multitudes in the following terms: "I have brought thee out into our midst; the whole people ardently desire thee. Heaven and earth

are firm and steadfast, may the king of families be equally firm and changeless!" In a subsequent code of laws, the Manava-Dharma-S'astra, may be read: "These masters of the world, who, so eagerly bent on making away with one another, put forth their strength in the fight without ever turning to look back, after death ascend straight to heaven." Indeed, they claim to be descended from the gods, regard themselves as the rivals of the latter, and as about to become gods themselves. Filial obedience, military courage, united with a sentiment of generous protection over all men, such is man's ideal. So far as woman is concerned, the Hindu epopee scarcely ever presents her under any other character than that of the faithful spouse. Neither Greece nor the nations of the north have ever pictured in their poems such noble and lofty-souled wives as the passionate Sita or the tender, loving Damayanti.

What the Hindu epopee does not tell us is the profound mystery of the mixture of the races, and the slow inculcation of the religious ideas which brought to pass profound changes in the social organisation of Vedic India. The Aryans, pure-blooded conquerors, found themselves in the presence of considerably mixed and inferior races, in which the yellow and red types were

blended into a multiplicity of shades on a dark background. Hindu civilisation thus appears to us as a formidable mountain, bearing a melanian race at its foot, mixed nations on its sides, and the pure Aryans on its summit. Separation of the castes not being rigorously insisted on in the early ages, great mixtures took place among these peoples. The purity of the conquering race diminished more and more as time went by, though even nowadays the predominance of the Aryan type in the higher classes, and of the melanian in the lower, may be noticed. From the turbid depths of Hindu society there was always springing forth a burning vapour of passion, a mixture of languor and ferocity, like the pestilential miasma of the jungles mingled with the odour exhaled by savage beasts. The superabundant black blood has given India a colour special to itself. It has refined the race, and rendered it effeminate at the same time. The strange thing is, that in spite of this mixed blood the ruling ideas of the white race have been able to keep themselves at the top of this civilisation through so many revolutions.

Here, then, we have the ethnical basis of India clearly outlined: on the one hand, the genius of the white race with its moral signification and its

sublime metaphysical aspirations ; on the other, that of the black race, with all its passionate element and dissolvent energy.

How is this double genius translated in the ancient religious history of India? The most ancient traditions speak of both a solar and a lunar dynasty. The kings of the former claimed to be descended from the sun, the latter called themselves sons of the moon. This symbolical language, however, threw a veil over two opposing religious conceptions, and signified that these two categories of sovereigns were attached to two different cults. The solar cult gave the male sex to the God of the universe. Around him was grouped the purest element in the Vedic tradition : the science of the sacred fire and of prayer, the respect due to women, the worship of ancestors, and the elective and patriarchal royalty. The lunar cult attributed to the deity the feminine sex, under which sign the religions of the Aryan cycle have ever given adoration to Nature, often to Nature blind and unconscious in her violent and terrible manifestations. This cult inclined towards idolatry and black magic, favoured polygamy and tyranny which depended on popular passion. The struggle between the sons of the moon and those of the sun, between the Kou-

ravas and the Pandavas, really form the subject of the great Hindu epopee, the Mahâbhârata, a kind of perspective résumé of the history of Aryan India before the definite constitution of Brahmanism. This struggle is full of desperate combats, strange and interminable adventures. In the middle of the epopee we find that the Kouravas, the lunar kings, are conquerors. The Pandavas, noble children of the sun and guardians of the unpolluted rites, are dethroned and banished. They wander about in exile, hiding themselves in forests, taking refuge with anchorites, weaving clothes made of the barks of trees, and each carrying a hermit's staff in his hand.

Are the baser instincts to triumph? Are the powers of darkness, represented in the Hindu epopee by the black Rakshasas, to gain the victory over the light-giving Devas? Is tyranny on the point of crushing the élite of the land beneath its war-chariot? Will the cyclone of evil passions dash to pieces the Vedic altar and extinguish the sacred ancestral fire? No. India is only at the outset of her religious evolution. She will manifest her metaphysical and organising genius in the institution of Brahmanism. The priests who officiated for the kings and chiefs under the name of *purohitas* (the ones

appointed to perform the sacrifice of fire) had already become their advisers and their ministers. They possessed great wealth, considerable influence, still they could not have given their caste that sovereign authority, that unassailable position, loftier than the royal power itself, but for the help afforded by another class of men personifying the spirit of India in its deepest and most original elements. These men were the anchorites.

From times immemorial these ascetics lived in hermitages away in the depths of forests, by the river side, or near a mountain, close by the sacred lakes. At times they might be met with alone, and again in brotherhoods, though always united in one identical spirit. In them might be recognised the spiritual kings, the veritable masters of India. Heirs of the Rishis, the sages of former days, they alone possessed the secret interpretation of the Vedas. In them lived the genius of asceticism, occult science, and transcendental powers. To attain to such science and power they braved everything: hunger and cold, the burning sun, and all the horrors of the jungles Defenceless in their wooden huts, they spent their days in prayer and meditation. With voice and look they summoned the serpents to their side or

removed them from their presence. They calmed the savage nature of lions and tigers. Happy the man who obtains their blessing—such a one shall have the Devas as his friends! Woe to the man who ill-treats or kills them—their malediction, so the poets say, pursues the guilty one right to his third incarnation. Kings tremble before their threats, and — curious to relate —these ascetics inspire fear even in the gods. In the Ramâyâna, Vis'vamitra, a king who has become an ascetic, acquires such power through meditation and austerity of life, that the gods trembled for their existence. Then Indra sends him the most ravishing of the Apsaras, who comes to bathe in the lake, in front of the saint's hut. The anchorite is seduced by the celestial nymph; a hero is born from their union, and for some thousands of years the existence of the universe is guaranteed. Beneath these poetical exaggerations may be divined the real and superior power of the anchorites belonging to the white race, who, with a power of unfathomable divination and mighty will, control the storm-tossed soul of India from the depths of their forests.

It was from the bosom of the confraternity of anchorites that the priestly resolution, which converted India into the most formidable of theo-

cracies, was to burst forth. The victory of spiritual over temporal power, of anchorite over king, whence arose the might of Brahmanism, was effected by a reformer of the first rank. In reconciling the genius of the white and that of the black race now struggling for supremacy, the solar and lunar worship, this divine man was the veritable creator of the national religion of India. In addition to this, this powerful genius by means of his doctrine spread abroad throughout the world a new idea, one of immense import, that of the divine word or of divinity incarnate in and manifested by man. This first of the Messiahs, this eldest of the sons of God, was Krishna.

His legend possesses the great interest of summing up and dramatising the whole of the Brahmanical doctrine. It has, however, remained, so to speak, scattered and floating about in tradition, for the very reason that plastic force is altogether foreign to the Hindu genius. The confused and mythical story of the *Vishnou-Pourana* gives us, however, historical information regarding Krishna of a nature at once individual and striking. In another direction, the *Bhagavad-Gita*—that wonderful fragment interpolated into the great poem of the Mahâbhârata, and which the Brahmans regard as one of their most sacred books--contains

in all its purity the doctrine attributed to him. It is in reading these two books that the person of the great religious initiator of India appears before me, with all the force of a living being. Accordingly I will relate the story of Krishna, drawing my material from these two sources, the first of which represents the popular tradition, and the second that of the initiates.

CHAPTER II

THE KING OF MATHURA

At the beginning of the Kali-Yuga age, about three thousand years before our era (according to the chronology of the Brahmans), the world was given up to the thirst for gold and material powers. For several centuries, says the sage of former times, Agni, the celestial fire which forms the glorious body of the Devas, and purifies the souls of mankind, had spread its ethereal effluvia over the whole earth. But the fevered breath of Kali, goddess of Desire and Death, issuing from the abysses of earth like a burning wind, then passed over the hearts of all men. There had been a reign of justice under the noble sons of Pandou, the solar kings who listened to the counsels of the sages. As victors they pardoned the conquerors, and treated them as equals. Since, however, the sons of the sun had been exterminated or driven from their thrones, and their few descendants took refuge with hermits, injustice, ambition, and hatred had gained the upper hand. Inconstant and false,

like the orb of night, whose symbol they had assumed, the lunar kings waged a merciless war on one another. One of them had finally succeeded in dominating all the rest, by reason of his singular prestige, and the terror he inspired in their hearts.

In the north of India, on the banks of a mighty river, flourished a powerful city. It contained twelve pagodas, ten palaces, and a hundred tower-flanked gates. Multi-coloured flags streamed from its lofty walls, like so many winged serpents. This was the haughty Mathura, impregnable fortress of Indra. There reigned Kansa, insatiable of soul and black of heart. He could not endure any but slaves around him. He imagined himself master only of what he had crushed to the ground, whilst what he possessed seemed nothing in comparison with what still remained for him to conquer. All the kings who acknowledged the lunar cult had paid him homage. It was Kansa's ambition, however, to bring into subjection the whole of India, from Lanka to the Himavat. To accomplish this object he formed an alliance with Kalayavana, ruler over the Vyndhia mountains, powerful monarch of the Yavanas, a yellow-faced race. A fervent disciple of the goddess Kali, Kalayavana had devoted himself to the shady arts of black

magic. He was called the friend of the Rakshasas, or the night-prowling demons, and king of the serpents, for he made use of these animals to terrify both his subjects and his foes. In the depths of a dense forest stood the temple of the goddess Kali; dug deep into the mountain was an immense black cavern, of which no one knew the secret recesses, whilst the entrance was guarded by colossal figures, with animals' heads, cut out in the rock. Here were brought such as wished to pay homage to Kalayavana, in order to obtain from him some secret power. He appeared at the entrance to the temple in the midst of a multitude of enormous serpents, which twined all round his body and raised aloft their heads at the command of his sceptre. He forced his tributaries to prostrate themselves before these animals, whose tangled heads bulged out beyond his own. At the same time he muttered some formula of mysterious meaning. Those who performed these rites and worshipped the serpents, obtained, so it was said, immense favours, and the accomplishment of all they wished for; but, in return, they fell irrevocably beneath the power of Kalayavana. Whether far away or close at hand, they remained his slaves. If they attempted to disobey him, or to escape his power, they imagined they saw appear before them the

terrible magician surrounded by his reptiles, whilst they stood paralysed by those hissing heads and fascinating eyes. Kansa asked Kalayavana to become his ally. The king of the Yavanas promised him the empire over the world on condition that he would marry his daughter.

Proud as an antelope and supple as a serpent was the daughter of the magician king—the beautiful Nysoumba, with her golden ear-pendants and shining ebony breast. Her countenance resembled a dark cloud on whose edge the moon has shed a bluish tint, her eyes flashed like lightning, whilst her ardent mouth was like the pulp of ripe red fruit with its pearly white pips. She might well have passed for Kali, the goddess of Desire, herself. Very soon she held undisputed sway over Kansa's heart ; breathing on his passions she converted them into a fiery brazier. Kansa's palace was full of women of every hue, but he listened to none except Nysoumba.

"If only thou gavest me a son, I would make him my heir ; then I should be master of the earth, and should fear no one."

And yet no son was born to Nysoumba, whereat her heart grew sore. She envied Kansa's other wives, whose nuptials had been blessed with offspring. She caused her father to multiply

sacrifice to Kali, but her womb remained barren as the sand of the sunburnt desert. Then the king of Mathura ordered that a great sacrifice of fire be offered up in the presence of the whole city, and that all the Devas be invoked. Kansa's wives and subjects attended in full pomp and ceremony. Prostrate before the fire the priests in song invoked the mighty Varouna, Indra, the As'vins, and the Maruts. The Queen Nysoumba drew near with defiant gesture and flung into the fire a handful of perfumes, uttering a magic formula in an unknown tongue. The smoke thickened, the flames wheeled in gloomy eddies of fire, and the priests exclaimed in consternation:

"O Queen! the Rakshasas have passed over the fire, not the Devas. Thou art destined to remain barren."

Kansa in his turn drew near the fire and said to the priests:

"Tell me then which of my wives shall give birth to the master of the world?"

At this moment Devaki, the king's sister, approached the fire. She was a simple-hearted, pure-souled virgin, whose childhood had been spent in weaving and spinning, and who passed her life as though in a dream; though her body was on earth, her soul seemed always in heaven.

Devaki humbly sank to her knees, praying that the Devas would give a son to her brother and the beautiful Nysoumba. The priest looked in turn at the fire and at the virgin. Suddenly, in utter wonderment, he exclaimed:

"O King of Mathura! none of thy sons shall be master of the world! He shall spring from the womb of thy sister here."

Great was Kansa's consternation and Nysoumba's wrath on hearing these words. When the queen was alone with the king she said to him:

"Devaki must perish at once!"

"How can I agree to the death of my sister?" replied Kansa. "If she is under the protection of the Devas, their vengeance will recoil on me."

"Then let her rule in my stead," said Nysoumba, filled with mad anger, "and give birth to him who shall bring you to an ignominious death. For my part, I will no longer reign with a coward afraid of the Devas, I will return to my father Kalayavana."

Nysoumba's eyes flashed with rage, whilst the ear-pendants shook over her dark shining neck; she rolled on the ground, and her beautiful lithe body twisted about like a maddened serpent's. Kansa, afraid of losing her, and fascinated by a

terrible voluptuousness, was tortured by a new-born desire.

"Devaki shall perish," he said, "if only you will not leave me."

A flash of triumph shone in Nysoumba's eyes, whilst the blood empurpled her dark countenance. Springing to her feet, she twined her supple arms round the yielding tyrant. Her ebony breasts bewitched him with the intoxicating perfumes they exhaled, and, pressing her burning lips against his own, she murmured low:

"We will offer a sacrifice to Kali, the goddess of Desire and Death; she will give us a son who will be ruler of the world."

That very night, however, the *purohita*, leader of the sacrifices, saw King Kansa in a vision drawing his sword against his sister. He immediately betook himself to the virgin Devaki, informed her that a mortal danger threatened her, and ordered her to escape at once to the hermits. Devaki, following the instructions of the priest of the fire, and disguised as a penitent, stole from Kansa's palace and left the city of Mathura without attracting attention. Early in the morning the soldiers sought for the king's sister to put her to death. They found her room empty. The king questioned the city guards, who replied that the

gates had remained closed all night. In their sleep, however, they had seen the gloomy walls of the fortress break beneath a ray of light, and a woman, following this ray, issue from the city. Kansa now knew that Devaki was protected by an invisible power. From that day fear entered his soul, and he began to hate his sister with a mortal hatred.

CHAPTER III

THE VIRGIN DEVAKI

WHEN Devaki, clad in a garb of bark which concealed her beauty, entered the mighty solitude of the giant forests, overcome with hunger and fatigue, her limbs tottered beneath her. No sooner, however, had she tasted the fruit of the mango tree than she returned to life, as does a drooping flower beneath the dews of heaven. First she made her way beneath enormous vaults formed by massive trunks of trees, whose branches, becoming replanted in the soil, multiplied to infinity their winding arcades. Long, long she walked, sheltered from the sun's rays as though in a gloomy pagoda which offered no outlet. The humming of bees, the shrill call of amorous peacocks, and the songs of thousands of other birds invited her ever onwards. The trees increased in size, and the forest became denser and more entangled than ever. Trunk after trunk appeared in serried rank, and foliage bulged out over foliage. Now Devaki would glide into verdant paths on

which the sun shed torrents of light, whilst on the ground lay extended trunks of trees dashed to earth by some mighty storm. Again, she would halt beneath the branches of mango trees and see wreaths of bindweed and flowers all around her. Deer and panthers sported in the thickets, from time to time buffaloes would crush through the undergrowth, or a band of apes pass by with shrill cries. She walked until evening, when, above a bamboo thicket, she perceived the motionless head of a sage elephant. With an intelligent, penetrating air, he looked at the virgin, and raised his trunk as though in greeting. Then the forest lit up, and Devaki saw spread before her gaze a divinely peaceful vision, full of celestial charm and glory.

Spreading out beneath her feet lay a pond, strewn with lotus flowers and blue nenuphars; its azure bosom resembled a second sky in the midst of that mighty foliage. Chaste storks, to all appearance plunged in deep reverie, stood motionless on its banks; a couple of gazelles were drinking its limpid waters. On the opposite banks, sheltered by a grove of palm trees, could be seen the hermitage of the anchorites. A peaceful rose-coloured light seemed to envelop the lake, the forest, and the dwelling of the holy Rishis. Away on the horizon the white peak of Mount Merou towered above the

ocean of forests. The plants were quickened by the breath of an invisible stream, and the dull, rumbling thunder of a distant cataract floated along the breeze like a melodious caress.

At the end of the pond Devaki saw a barque. An anchorite of advanced age was standing in it, seemingly awaiting her. Without uttering a word he motioned to the virgin to enter, and himself took up the oars. As the barque was silently cleaving the waters, gently brushing the nenuphars, Devaki saw a female swan swimming on the pond. With bold flight a male swan, appearing in the air, began to wheel around her in mighty circles, then he dashed down on to the water close to his mate, a trembling thrill passing over his snow-white plumage. At the sight Devaki quivered throughout her being, without knowing why. The barque had now reached the opposite bank, and the lotus-eyed virgin found herself in the presence of the king of the anchorites, Vasishta.

Seated on a gazelle skin, and clad in the skin of a black antelope, his venerable aspect resembled that of a god rather than of a man. For sixty years he had fed on nothing but wild fruit. His hair and beard were white as the peaks of the Himavat, his skin transparent, and a vague look in his eyes, fixed in meditation. When he

saw Devaki, he arose and greeted her with the words :

"Devaki, sister of the renowned Kansa, we bid thee welcome. Guided by Mahâdeva, the Supreme Master, thou hast left a world of sorrow for one of bliss. Here thou art among the holy Rishis, controllers of the senses, happy in their destiny, and ever pressing on the heavenly path. Long have we awaited thee, as night awaits the dawn. For we who live in the depths of the forests are the eyes of the Devas, ever fixed on the world. Men do not see us, but we see them, and follow their deeds. The gloomy age of desire, bloodshed, and crime is raging on earth. They must be delivered, and the Devas have chosen thee as the means of their salvation. In the womb of a woman the ray of divine splendour is to receive human form."

At this moment the Rishis left the hermitage for evening prayer. The venerable Vasishta commanded them to bow to the ground before Devaki. They obeyed his will, and Vasishta continued : "This virgin is to be mother to us all, since of her is to be born the spirit which is to regenerate us." Then, turning to Devaki, he said : "Follow the Rishis, my daughter ; they will conduct thee to the neighbouring pond, where the penitent sisters

dwell. Amongst them thou shalt live, and the mysteries shall be accomplished."

Devaki went to live in the hermitage, surrounded with bindweed, among the pious women who fed the tame gazelles, and spent their time in ablutions and prayers. Devaki took part in their sacrifices. An aged woman gave her secret instructions. These penitents had been ordered to clothe her like a queen, with exquisite perfumed drapery, and then to leave her to wander alone in the open forest. This forest, full of celestial perfumes and mysterious voices, attracted the maiden. At times she met processions of old anchorites returning from the stream. On seeing her they sank to their knees, then rose and continued on their way. One day, near a spring covered with a veil of rose-coloured lotuses, she noticed a young anchorite praying. As she approached he rose to his feet, fixed on her a long and sorrowful look, and moved away without a word. The grave serious faces of the old men, the image of the two swans, and the look the young anchorite had given her, haunted the virgin in her dreams. Near the spring stood a mighty-branched tree, old beyond the memory of man; this the Rishis called "the tree of life." Devaki liked to sit beneath its shade. Often would she sink to sleep there, and strange visions would

come to her. Voices sang behind the foliage: "Hail to thee, glorious Devaki! That pure fluid, emanating from the mighty soul of all things, shall come, crowned with light, and the stars shall pale before its splendour. It shall come, and life shall challenge death. It shall restore youth to all beings. It shall come, sweeter than honey or amrita, purer than the spotless lamb or the mouth of a virgin, and all hearts shall be transported with raptures of love. Glory, glory to thee, Devaki!"[1] Were these the Devas or the anchorites who sang such strains? At times she felt that some far-off influence or mysterious presence, like an invisible hand hovering above her, was impelling her to sleep. Then she fell into a deep and inexplicable slumber, from which she awoke in mingled confusion and anxiety. She looked around as though seeking some one, but always in vain. From time to time, however, she would find roses scattered over her leafy couch and a wreath of lotus flowers in her hands.

One day Devaki fell into an ecstatic condition, more profound than ever before. She heard celestial music, like an ocean of harps and divine voices. Suddenly the heavens opened in an abyss of light. Thousands of shining beings were watching over

[1] *Atharva-Veda.*

her, and in the glory of a flashing beam of light, Mahâdeva, the sun of suns, appeared to her in human form. Then, seeing herself *overshadowed* by the Spirit of the universe, she lost consciousness, and, forgetting all earthly life, in a state of happiness beyond all power to express, she conceived the divine child.[1]

When seven moons had accomplished their magic circles around the sacred forest, the chief of the anchorites caused Devaki to be summoned into his presence :—

"The will of the Devas is accomplished," he said. "Thou hast conceived in purity of heart and divine love. Virgin and mother, we greet thee. Thou

[1] At this point a note is indispensable regarding the symbolical signification of the legend, and the real origin of those who have borne in the pages of history the name of "Sons of God." According to the secret doctrine of India, which was also that of the initiates of Egypt and of Greece, the human soul is the daughter of heaven; since, before being born on earth, it has had a series of bodily and spiritual existences. The father and mother, accordingly, only engender the child's body, since its soul comes from elsewhere. This universal law is binding on all. The greatest prophets, even those in whom the divine word has spoken, cannot escape it. And really, when once the pre-existence of the soul is admitted, the question of paternity becomes merely a secondary one. What it is important to believe is that this prophet comes from a divine world, and this the true sons of God prove by their life and death. Initiates of past times have not considered it their duty to inform the ordinary public of such things. Some of those who have appeared in the world as divine messengers were sons of initiates, their mothers had frequented the temples in order to conceive children who should be of the elect.

shalt give birth to a son, destined to be the Saviour of the world. Thy brother Kansa, however, is seeking to destroy both thyself and the tender fruit thou bearest in thy womb. He must be escaped from; the brothers will guide thee to the shepherds who dwell at the foot of Mount Merou, beneath the sweet-smelling cedars, away in the pure air of the Himavat. There thou shalt give birth to thy divine son, and shalt call him KRISHNA, the SACRED. But let him know nothing of his origin or of thine own; never speak to him of these matters. Now go, fear not, for we are keeping watch over thee."

Accordingly Devaki made her way to the shepherds of Mount Merou.

CHAPTER IV

KRISHNA'S YOUTH

At the foot of Mount Merou extended a beautiful valley, dotted with pastures and overshadowed by mighty forests of cedars, through which passed the pure air of the Himavat. In this lofty valley dwelt a tribe of shepherds, over whom reigned the patriarch Nanda, a friend of the anchorites. It was here that Devaki found refuge from the persecutions of the tyrant of Mathura; it was here that, in Nanda's dwelling, she gave birth to her son Krishna. With the exception of Nanda, no one knew who the stranger was, nor who was the father of her son. The women of the district merely said: "He is a son of the Gandharvas.[1] The musicians of Indra must have been present at the amours of this woman, who resembles a heavenly nymph, an Apsara." The marvellous child of the unknown woman grew up among the shepherds and their flocks, beneath his mother's

[1] These are genii, who, in Hindu poetry, are regarded as presiding over love marriages.

watchful care. The shepherds called him "The Radiant," for his mere presence, his smile, and his large round eyes had the gift of scattering joy on all around. Animals, children, women, and men, all loved him, and he seemed to love them all in return, smiling on his mother, sporting with the sheep and the children of his own age, or speaking with the old men. The child Krishna knew no fear, he was extremely bold and ready to perform the most astonishing deeds. At times he would be found in the woods, stretched out on the moss, hugging young tigers to his breast, and holding their jaws open, without their making the slightest attempt to bite him. A sudden fit of abstraction would often come over him, or a strange sadness, or even a feeling of profound wonder. At such times he remained aloof from his companions, and, with a grave, fixed expression in his eyes, made no reply to any question asked him. Above all else in the world Krishna was filled with an intense love for his young mother, whose face appeared so beautiful and shining as she spoke to him of the heaven of the Devas, of heroic combats, and many other wonderful things she had learnt among the anchorites. The shepherds would say to one another, as they gently led their flocks beneath the cedars of Mount Merou: "Who is this mother and her son?

Although clad in the garb of our own wives, she has the air of a queen. This wonderful child is being brought up among our own, and yet he is quite different from the rest. Is he a genius? Is he a god? Whatever he be, he will bring us good fortune."

When Krishna was fifteen years of age, a summons came to his mother Devaki from the chief of the anchorites. One day she disappeared without bidding her son good-bye. Krishna, unable to find her anywhere, went to the patriarch Nanda, and said to him:

"Where is my mother?"

Nanda replied, with a shake of the head:

"Ask me no questions, my child. Thy mother has gone a long journey. She has returned to the land whence she came, and I do not know when she will come back."

Krishna made no reply, but sank into so profound a reverie that all the children moved away from him, as though impelled by some superstitious fear. Krishna abandoned his games and companions, and, buried in thought, went unaccompanied over Mount Merou. For several weeks he wandered about alone. One morning he reached a lofty peak covered with trees, from which the chain of the Himavat could be seen. Suddenly by his side there

appeared a tall old man, wearing a white anchorite's robe, standing in the morning light beneath the great cedars. He seemed a hundred years of age ; his snow-white beard and shining forehead were majestic to behold. The child, radiant with life, and the centenarian looked at one another with steadfast gaze, the eyes of the latter resting complacently on Krishna. The child was so astonished at the sight which struck his eyes, that he stood there dumb with admiration. He seemed to know him, though this was the first time he had seen him.

"Whom seekest thou ?" asked the old man, after a time.

"My mother."

"She is no longer here."

"Then where shall I find her ?"

"With Him who is unchangeable."

"And how shall I find Him ? '

"Seek."

"And shall I see thee again ?"

"Yes ; when the daughter of the Serpent drives the son of the Bull to crime, then shalt thou see me again in a purple halo. In that day shalt thou kill the Bull and crush the Serpent's head. Son of Mahâdeva, know that thou and I make only one in Him ! Seek Him ! . . . Seek, seek ever !"

When he had finished speaking, the old man stretched out his hands in token of benediction. Then he turned slowly round, and took a few steps beneath the lofty cedars, in the direction of Himavat. Of a sudden, it seemed to Krishna that his majestic form was becoming transparent, then it began to quiver, and finally disappeared amid luminous vibrations beneath the scintillation of the delicate tapering branches.[1]

When Krishna came down from Mount Merou, he appeared like one transfigured. New energy and life shone from his entire being. Assembling his companions, he said to them: "Let us go and destroy the bulls and the serpents; come with me to defend the good and overcome the wicked." Bow in hand and sword by side, Krishna and his companions, shepherds' sons transformed into warriors, began to march through the forests and engage in combat with the wild beasts. In the depths of the woods could be heard the howlings of hyenas, jackals, and tigers, and the shouts of triumph of the young warriors over the vanquished animals. Krishna killed and tamed lions, made war on kings, and set free oppressed tribes.

[1] There is a firm belief throughout India that great ascetics can manifest themselves in visible form at a distance, whilst their physical body remains plunged in cataleptic sleep.

Deep in his heart, however, was a well of sadness; this heart contained only one mighty, mysterious, unacknowledged desire—to find his mother and see that strange sublime old man once more. He recalled to mind the words: "Has he not promised that I shall see him again when I have crushed the Serpent's head? Has he not told me that I shall find my mother near Him who never changes?" But he had fought, overcome, and killed in vain, for neither the sublime old man nor his radiant mother had again appeared before him. One day, mention was made in his presence of Kalayavana, king of the serpents. Krishna asked to fight against the most terrible of his beasts, in the presence of the black magician himself. It was said that this animal, trained by Kalayavana, had already devoured hundreds of men, and that the very sight of it sent a chill of horror through the hearts of the boldest. From the depths of Kali's mirky temple, Krishna saw a long reptile, of a greenish-blue tint, issue at Kalayavana's summons. The serpent slowly raised his huge form, puffed out his red crest, whilst a pair of piercing eyes lit up his monstrous head, helmeted with shining scales. "This serpent," said Kalayavana, "is a powerful demon, in possession of many secrets. These he will divulge only to the

one who slays him, but he kills those who prove the weaker in the combat. He has seen thee, his eyes are fixed on thee, thou art now in his power. All that remains to be done is to worship him, or perish in a foolish strife." At these words Krishna was filled with indignation; he felt that his heart was like a thunderbolt. With fixed gaze he rushed upon the serpent, seizing him below the head. Man and beast together rolled over and over on the temple steps. But before the reptile could enlace him in his folds, with a stroke of his sword Krishna lopped off his head, and, leaping aside from the still writhing body, the young conqueror, with a look of triumph, raised aloft the serpent's head in his left hand. This head still lived, and, with eyes fastened on Krishna, the mouth said: "Wherefore hast thou slain me, son of Mahâdeva? Dost thou think that truth can be found by slaying the living? Insensate, only by thine own death shalt thou find truth! Death is in life, life in death. Beware of the serpent's daughter and the blood thou hast shed. Beware! Beware!" After uttering these words, the serpent died. Krishna dropped his head on his breast, and, filled with horror, left the spot. Kalayavana said: "I have no power over this man, Kali alone can vanquish him by a charm."

After a month's ablutions and prayers on the banks of the Ganges, having purified himself in the light of the sun and the thought of Mahâdeva, Krishna returned to his native land and the shepherds of Mount Merou.

The shining orb of an autumn moon appeared over the forests of cedars, and the evening air was filled with the fragrant odours of wild lilies. Seated at the foot of a tall cedar, on the edge of a green sward, Krishna, tired with the vain struggles of earth, was dreaming of heavenly combats and of the infinitude of space. The more he thought of his glorious mother and the sublime old man, the more despicable seemed his own childish exploits, and the more living and real became his heavenly visions. He was wholly enveloped in a consoling charm, a reminiscence of the divine. From his heart rose a hymn of gratitude to Mahâdeva, pouring forth from his lips in sweet heavenly strains. Attracted by the wonderful song, the Gopis, the daughters and wives of the shepherds, issued from their dwellings. A few drew near, calling out "Krishna! Krishna!" then, abashed at their audacity, they took to flight. Gradually, becoming more and more emboldened, the women surrounded Krishna in groups, like timid inquisitive gazelles, charmed by his strains,

He, however, lost in divine reveries, saw them not. More and more excited by his songs, the Gopis began to show impatience at receiving no attention. Nichdali, Nanda's daughter, had closed her eyes and fallen into a kind of ecstasy. But Sarasvati, her sister, of a bolder nature, glided close to Devaki's son, and said in caressing accents:

"O Krishna! seest thou not that we are listening to thee, that we can no longer sleep in our dwellings? Thy melodies are full of enchantment for us, O glorious hero! We have become enslaved by thy voice; no longer can we live without thee."

"Sing on," said a young maiden, "teach us to modulate our voices to thine."

"Teach us to dance," exclaimed another.

Krishna, returning from his reverie, cast on the Gopis looks of divine benevolence. He spoke to them gently, and, taking their hands in his own, made them sit down on the sward, beneath the shadow of the mighty cedars, in the light of the gently-glowing moon. Then he related what he had seen within himself: the story of the gods and heroes, the wars of Indra, and the exploits of the divine Rama. Maidens and women listened in raptured wonder. These stories lasted the whole

night, and when the dew-tipped dawn arose over Mount Merou, and the kokilas[1] began to warble beneath the cedars, the wives and daughters of the Gopis silently returned to their dwellings. The following evening, however, as soon as the magic moon had put forth her shining orb, they returned, more eager than before. Krishna, seeing that they were becoming too entranced by what he told them, taught them to sing, and to simulate in gesture the glorious deeds of the heroes and gods. To some he gave vînas, with soul-thrilling strings; to others, sounding cymbals; and again, to others, drums, whose sound resembled the dull roll of thunder. Choosing the most beautiful, he inspired into their hearts his own thoughts. And so, with outstretched arms, gliding and moving as though in a divine dream, the sacred dancers represented the majesty of Varouna, the anger of Indra slaying the dragon, or the despair of abandoned Mâyâ. In this way the combats and the immortal glory of the gods, which Krishna had contemplated in the depths of his own nature, sprang to renewed life in these happy and enraptured women.

One morning the Gopis had dispersed in different directions. The sound of their varied instruments and their chanting happy voices was

[1] Indian cuckoo.

lost in the distance. Krishna, alone at the foot of the cedar, saw Nanda's two daughters, Sarasvati and Nichdali, draw near. They sat down by his side. Sarasvati, flinging her arms round Krishna's neck, and shaking her bracelets, said to him: "Thou hast made us the happiest of women by means of the songs and sacred dances thou hast taught us, but when once thou leavest us, we shall be the most miserable. What will become of us when we behold thee no more? O Krishna! Marry my sister and myself; we will be thy faithful wives, and our eyes shall not have the grief of losing thee." Whilst Sarasvati was speaking thus, Nichdali had her eyes closed in a state of ecstasy.

"Nichdali, wherefore dost thou close thine eyes?" asked Krishna.

"She is jealous," replied Sarasvati, laughing. "She does not wish to see my arms round thy neck."

"No," replied Nichdali with a blush. "I close mine eyes the better to contemplate thine image, which is engraved in the very depths of my being. Though thou depart, Krishna, I shall never lose thee."

Krishna had become pensive. With a smile, he unwound Sarasvati's arms from their passionate embrace. Then he looked at the sisters

in turn, and entwined his arms around their forms. First, he placed his mouth on Sarasvati's lips, then, on Nichdali's eyes. In these two long-drawn embraces the young Krishna seemed to fathom and taste of all the delights of earth. Suddenly a quiver ran through his frame, and he said :

"Thou art beautiful, Sarasvati! Thy lips possess the perfume of amber and of every flower in creation. Thou art adorable, O Nichdali! thine eyelids veil those profound regards which look into thine inmost being. I love you both; but how can I marry you, as my heart would have to be shared between you?"

"Ah! He will never love!" said Sarasvati, vexed.

"I shall only love with an eternal love."

"And what is needed for you to love so?" said Nichdali, in tender accents.

Krishna rose to his feet, flames of light flashing from his eyes.

"To love with an eternal love," he said, "the light of day must vanish, the dark thunderbolt crush into my heart, and my soul escape from self to the heights of heaven!"

As he spoke he seemed to the young maidens to have grown a cubit taller. Suddenly they were

struck with fear, and returned home in tears. Krishna proceeded alone along the path to Mount Merou. On the following night the Gopis assembled once more for their wonted pastime, but they waited in vain for their master. He had disappeared, leaving them only an essence, a perfume of his being, in the songs and sacred dances.

CHAPTER V

INITIATION

AND now King Kansa, hearing that his sister Devaki had been living with the anchorites, and being unable to discover her, began to persecute them and hunt them like wild beasts. They were obliged to take refuge in the innermost and wildest parts of the forest. Thereupon their chief, old Vasishta, though a hundred years of age, set out to speak to the King of Mathura. The guards were astonished at the sight of a blind old man, guided by a gazelle he held in leash, in front of the palace gates. Filled with respect for the Rishi, they allowed him to pass. Vasishta drew near the throne on which Kansa was seated by Nysoumba's side, and said to him :

"Kansa, King of Mathura, woe to thee, son of the Bull, thou who persecutest the hermits of the holy forest! Woe to thee, daughter of the Serpent, thou who breathest hatred into his heart. The day of thy punishment is at hand. Know that Devaki's son lives. He shall come,

covered with armour of scales that cannot be broken, and shall drive thee ignominiously from thy throne. Tremble, pass thy days in fear; this is the chastisement the Devas assign to thee."

Warriors, guards, and servants had sunk to the ground in the presence of this holy centenarian, who left the palace, under the guidance of the gazelle, without any one daring to touch him. From that day forth Kansa and Nysoumba took counsel together as to the way in which they might secretly destroy the king of the anchorites. Devaki was dead, and none, with the exception of Vasishta, knew that Krishna was her son. And yet, the rumour of his daring deeds had reached the king's ears. Kansa reflected: "I need a strong man to defend me. He who slew Kalayavana's mighty serpent will not be afraid of the anchorite." Then he sent word to the patriarch Nanda: "Send me the young hero, Krishna; I would make him driver of my chariot and my first counsellor."[1] Nanda informed Krishna of the king's order, and Krishna replied: "I will go." Within his own breast he

[1] In ancient India these two functions were often united into one. The kings' chariot-drivers were often mighty personages and ministers of the monarchs. Instances of this double function abound in Hindu poetry.

thought: "Can the King of Mathura be He who never changes? Through Him I shall discover where my mother is."

Kansa, seeing Krishna's strength, his skill and intelligence, was greatly pleased with him, and entrusted the guardianship of his kingdom into the young man's keeping. Nysoumba, when she saw the hero of Mount Merou, felt an impure desire assail her flesh; her cunning mind and criminal thoughts wove together a sombre plot. Unknown to the king, she had his chariot-driver summoned into her gynaeceum. She possessed the magic art of momentarily regaining her youth by the aid of powerful philters. Devaki's son found Nysoumba, her ebony bosom almost wholly undraped, stretched on a purple couch. Her arms and wrists were encircled with gold rings, whilst a diadem of precious stones glittered on her head. At her feet burned a copper perfuming-pan, from which a thin stream of incense mounted to the roof.

"Krishna," said the daughter of the king of the serpents, "thy brow is more placid and calm than the snow of the Himavat; thy heart is like the lightning flash. In thine innocence thou shinest above the kings of the earth. Here no one has recognised thee; thou knowest not even

thyself. I alone know who thou art: the Devas have made of thee the master of men; I alone can make of thee the ruler of the world. Wilt thou be that ruler?"

"If Mahâdeva is speaking with thy voice," said Krishna gravely, "thou wilt tell me where my mother is, and where I may find the old man who spoke to me beneath the cedars of Mount Merou."

"Thy mother?" said Nysoumba, a smile of disdain on her proud lips. "Indeed it is not I who will tell thee where she is, whilst as for the old man of whom thou speakest, I know him not. Insensate! Thou followest after dreams, and seest not the treasures of the earth I now offer thee. There are kings who wear a royal crown, and yet are not kings. There are shepherds' sons who bear the ensign of royalty on their brow, and yet are ignorant of their power. Thou art strong, young, and beautiful to behold: all hearts are thine. Kill the king in his sleep and I will place the crown on thine head; then shalt thou be ruler of the world. For I love thee; thou art predestined to be mine. I will, I command that it be so!"

As she spoke the queen rose from her recumbent posture, imperious and fascinating, terrible

as a beautiful serpent. . . . Rising on her couch, her dark eyes shot forth so sombre a flame into Krishna's limpid orbs that he shuddered in dismay. The depths of hell were laid bare before him in that look. He saw the abyss of the temple of Kali, the Goddess of Desire and Death. Serpents were writhing about as though in everlasting torture. Then of a sudden Krishna's eyes seemed like twin swords, they pierced the queen through and through, and the hero of Mount Merou exclaimed :

" I am faithful to the king who has taken me as his defender ; but thou, know that thou shalt die ! "

Nysoumba uttered a piercing shriek, and rolled over and over on her couch, biting the purple hangings in her fury. All her false youth had vanished, once more she had become old and wrinkled. Krishna, leaving her alone with her wrath, made his way out of the palace.

Persecuted night and day by the anchorite's words, the King of Mathura said to his chariot-driver :

" Ever since the enemy has set foot in my palace I no longer sleep peacefully on my throne. An infernal magician, named Vasishta, who lives in the depths of a mighty forest, has cast on me his curse. Now I cannot live in peace, the old man has poisoned my days. But with you, who fear nothing, by my side, I dread him not. Come with me into

the accursed forest. A spy, well acquainted with all its by-paths, will guide us to him. As soon as you see him, run up and strike, before he can utter a word or cast on you a single glance. When he is mortally wounded, ask him where may be found the son of my sister Devaki, and what is his name. The peace of my kingdom depends on the solving of this mystery."

"Courage!" replied Krishna. "I was afraid neither of Kalayavana, nor of the serpent of Kali. Who could cause me to tremble now? However powerful this man be, I will find out what he is concealing from you."

Disguised as hunters, the king and his guide rolled away in a rapid chariot, drawn by fiery horses. The spy, who had explored the forest, was in the rear of the chariot. It was the commencement of the rainy season. The rivers were swollen, and the roads covered with plant vegetation, whilst a white line of storks appeared riding on the clouds. As they drew near the sacred forest, the horizon became overcast, a light veil overspread the sun, and the air was filled with a copper-tinted misty vapour. From the storm-laden heavens hung dark clouds, like hunting-horns, over the quivering foliage of the tree-tops.

"Wherefore has the sky so suddenly darkened?" asked Krishna. "Why has the forest become so black?"

"I know the reason," said the King of Mathura. "It is Vasishta, the wicked hermit, who darkens the sky, and arms the cursed forest against me. Art thou afraid, Krishna?"

"Though the sky were to change its visage, and the earth its colour, I should still be undismayed!"

"Forward, then!"

Krishna whipped up the horses, and the chariot entered beneath the dense shade of the baobabs. For some time it rolled along with marvellous rapidity, but still the forest became more wild and terrible in aspect. Lightning flashed forth, peals of thunder were heard.

"Never have I seen the sky so black," said Krishna, "nor the branches of the trees become entwined in this way. This is indeed a powerful magician."

"Krishna, slayer of serpents, hero of Mount Merou, art thou afraid?"

"Though the earth quake to its foundations, and the vault of heaven fall in, I should still fear not!"

"Then continue thy way!"

Once more the bold driver whipped the steeds, and the chariot resumed its course. Then the tempest became so frightful that the giant trees

rocked to and fro. The shattered forest moaned as though with the howling and shrieking of a thousand demons. A thunderbolt fell close by the travellers, and a shattered baobab barred the path. Then the horses suddenly stopped, and the earth quaked.

"Thy enemy must be a god," said Krishna, "for Indra himself protects him."

"We are nearing the end," said the king's spy. "You see that verdant passage; right at the end is a wretched hut, and it is there that Vasishta, the great mouni, dwells, feeding the birds. He is an object of terror to the wild beasts, and is himself protected by a gazelle. But I would not advance another step, no, not for a kingdom."

On hearing these words, the King of Mathura had turned livid. "He is there! Behind those trees!" And, clutching hold of Krishna, trembling the while in every limb, he whispered:

"Vasishta! Vasishta! who is plotting my death, is there. From the depths of his lair he sees me. . . . His eye is fixed on me. Oh, deliver me from his power!"

"That I will, by Mahâdeva!" said Krishna, dismounting from the chariot and leaping on the trunk of the baobab. "I must see him who makes you tremble so."

The centenarian mouni, Vasishta, had dwelt for a year in this hut, concealed in the deepest part of the holy forest, awaiting his end. Before the death of the body, he was freed from its prison. Though his eyes were sightless, he saw by the vision of the soul. His skin was scarcely conscious of heat or cold, but his spirit lived in peaceful unity with the sovereign spirit. He now only saw the things of this world through the light of Brahma, and was unceasingly engaged in prayer and meditation. A faithful disciple left the hermitage every day to bring him the scanty grain of rice on which he lived. The gazelle, which browsed from his hand, warned him of the approach of wild beasts by braying. Then he drove them away by murmuring a mantra, and extending his seven-knotted bamboo staff. His inner vision enabled him to see the approach of men, whoever they might be, from a distance of several leagues.

Krishna, proceeding along the dark path, suddenly found himself before Vasishta. The king of the anchorites was seated with legs crossed on a mat, in a state of profound peace, leaning against the post of his hut. From his sightless eyes there shone the inner illumination of the seer. No sooner had Krishna perceived him than he recognised "the sublime old man." He felt a wave of joy

pass over him, and a feeling of respect utterly subdued his soul. Forgetting the king, his chariot and his kingdom, he knelt down before the saint . . . and worshipped him.

Vasishta seemed to see him; his body quitted its recumbent posture, and, stretching forth both arms to bless his guest, his lips murmured the sacred syllable—AUM.[1]

King Kansa, hearing no sound, and finding that his charioteer did not return, followed him with furtive steps along the path, and stood petrified with amazement at seeing Krishna on his knees before the holy anchorite. The latter fixed on Kansa his sightless eyes, and, raising his staff, said:

"Hail! King of Mathura! Thou art come to slay me! Welcome! For thou shalt free me from the burden of this body. Thou wishest to know where is the son of thy sister Devaki who is to dethrone thee. This is he, kneeling before me, and before Mahâdeva—Krishna, thine own charioteer! Think how insensate and accursed thou art, for this is thy most redoubtable enemy. Thou hast brought him here for me to tell him that

[1] In the Brahmanic initiation this signifies the Supreme God, the God-Spirit. Each letter corresponds to one of the divine faculties, or, speaking in popular language, to one of the persons of the Trinity.

he is the predestined child. Tremble! Thou art lost, for thy infernal soul will now be the prey of demons."

Kansa listened in utter stupefaction. Not daring to look at the old man face to face, and pale with rage at seeing Krishna still on his knees, he took his bow, and stretching it with all the strength of his arms, let fly an arrow against Devaki's son. His arm, however, trembled, the shaft swerved from its course, and the arrow plunged into the breast of Vasishta, who, with arms extended in the form of a cross, seemed to await it with ecstatic bliss.

And now a terrible cry rang forth, not from the old man's breast, but from Krishna's. He had heard the arrow hiss past his ear, had seen it in the flesh of the saint . . . and it seemed as though the shaft had pierced his own heart, so closely united at that moment was his own soul with that of the Rishi. With that keen arrow the grief of the whole world entered Krishna's soul, torturing it to its very depths.

Vasishta, however, the arrow still in his breast, and with posture unchanged, once more opened his lips. He murmured:

"Son of Mahâdeva, wherefore didst thou utter this cry? To slay is vain and ineffectual. The

arrow cannot reach the soul ; the victim vanquishes the assassin. Triumph, Krishna ! thy destiny is being accomplished. I now return to Him who never changes. Brahma, receive my soul. But thou, His elect, saviour of the world — Up ! Krishna ! Krishna ! "

Krishna rose to his feet, sword in hand, intending to turn on the king, but the latter had fled.

Then a radiant flash rent asunder the black heavens, and Krishna fell to the ground, struck down by a dazzling light. Whilst his body remained insensible, his soul, united to that of the old man by the attraction of sympathy, mounted into space. Earth, with its rivers, seas, and continents, disappeared like a black ball, and both rose to the seventh heaven of the Devas, towards the Father of beings, the sun of suns, Mahâdeva, the divine intelligence. They plunged into an ocean of light opening out before them. In the centre of the sphere Krishna saw Devaki, his radiant, glorified mother, who, with an ineffable smile, stretched out her arms and drew him to her bosom. Thousands of Devas came to steep themselves in the radiance of the Virgin-Mother as in an incandescent flame. Krishna felt himself absorbed once again in Devaki's look of love. Then, from the heart of the radiant mother, his being shone out through the entire

heavens. He felt that he was the Son, the divine soul of all beings, the Word of life, the creative Logos. Raised above universal life, he yet penetrated it by the essence of pain, the fire of prayer, and the felicity of a divine sacrifice.[1]

[1] The legend of Krishna enables us to grasp from its very source the idea of the Virgin-Mother, the Mary-God, and the Trinity. . . . In India this idea appears from the origin, in its transparent symbolism, with its profound metaphysical signification. In Book v., Chapter ii., the *Vishnou-Pourana*, after relating the conception of Krishna by Devaki, adds: "No one could look at Devaki by reason of the light in which she was enveloped; those who beheld her splendour felt their minds troubled; the gods, invisible to mortal eyes, were continually singing her praises, since Vishnou was embodied in her person. They said: Thou art that infinite and subtle Prakriti, who formerly bore Brahma in her womb; thou wast afterwards the goddess of the Word, the energy of the Creator of the universe, and the mother of the Vedas. O thou eternal being, comprising in thy substance the essence of all created things, thou art one with creation; thou wast the sacrifice whence proceeds all that the earth produces; thou art the word, which by friction engenders fire. Like Aditi, thou art the mother of the gods; like Diti, thou art the mother of the Daityas, their enemies. Thou art the light whence springs the day; thou art humility, mother of true wisdom. Thou art the politics of kings, mother of order; thou art desire from which love is born; thou art satisfaction, the source of resignation; thou art intelligence, the mother of science; thou art patience, mother of courage; the firmament and stars are thy children; from thee proceeds all that exists. . . . Thou hast descended to earth for the salvation of the world. Have pity on us, O goddess! Show thyself favourable to the universe; be proud to bear the god who upholds the world."

This passage proves that the Brahmans identified the mother of Krishna with the universal substance and the feminine principle of nature. They made of her the second person of the divine trinity, of the initial non-manifested triad. The Father, Nara (Eternal Masculine); the Mother, Nari (Eternal Feminine); and the Son, Virâj (Creative Word), such are the divine faculties. In other terms—the

When Krishna came to himself, the thunder was still pealing through the sky, the forest plunged in darkness, and torrents of rain fell upon the hut. A gazelle was licking the blood on the body of the pierced ascetic. "The sublime old man" was now no more than a corpse. Krishna, however, rose as from the dead. A mighty abyss separated him from the world and its vain appearances. He had lived the great truth, and understood his mission.

King Kansa, terror-stricken, was fleeing in his storm-driven chariot, his horses prancing and rearing as though lashed by a thousand demons.

intellectual principle, the plastic principle, and the productive principle. All three together constitute the *natura naturans*, to use Spinoza's expression. The organised world, the living universe, *natura naturata*, is the product of the creative word, which in turn is manifested under three forms: Brahma, the Spirit, corresponding to the divine world; Vishnou, the Soul, to the human world; and Siva, the body, to the natural world. In these three worlds, the male and the female principles are equally active, and the Eternal Feminine is manifested at once in terrestrial, human, and divine nature. Isis is triple, as also is Cybele. As one may see, when thus conceived, the double trinity, that of God and of the universe, contains the principles and the framework of a theodicy and a cosmogony. It is just to recognise that this primitive idea springs from India. All the ancient temples, all great religions, and several great philosophies, have adopted it. From apostolic times, and in the early centuries of Christianity, the Christian initiates revered the feminine principle of visible and invisible nature under the name of the Holy Ghost, represented by a dove, the sign of feminine power in all the temples of Asia and Europe. Even though the Church has since hidden or lost the key of its mysteries, their signification is still written in its symbols.

CHAPTER VI

THE DOCTRINE OF THE INITIATES

KRISHNA was greeted by the anchorites as the expected and predestined successor of Vasishta. The Shrâddha, or funeral ceremony of the holy ascetic, was performed in the sacred forest, and Devaki's son received the seven-knotted staff, the symbol of command, after accomplishing the sacrifice of fire in the presence of the oldest anchorites, those who know the three Vedas by heart. Then Krishna withdrew to Mount Merou, there to meditate on his doctrine and the way of salvation for men. His meditations and austere practices lasted seven years. At the end of this time he felt that he had tamed his earthly by his heavenly nature, and that he had sufficiently identified himself with the son of Mahâdeva to merit the name of Son of God. Then, only, he summoned the anchorites, both young and old, into his presence, to reveal to them his doctrine. They found Krishna the hero transformed into a saint; purer and nobler in soul. Without losing the strength of the lion, he had

gained the gentleness of the dove. Amongst the first to greet him was Arjuna, a descendant of the solar kings, one of the Pandavas, dethroned by the Kouravas or lunar kings. The young Arjuna was full of fire, but too ready to fall into discouragement and doubt. He became passionately attached to Krishna.

Seated beneath the cedars of Mount Merou, in front of the Himavat, Krishna began to speak to his disciples of the truths inaccessible to such as live under the slavery of the senses. He taught them the doctrine of the immortal soul, its rebirths and mystical union with God. . . . The body, he said, envelope of the soul, which makes therein its dwelling, is a finished thing, but the indwelling soul is invisible, imponderable, incorruptible, eternal.[1] The earthly man is threefold, like the divinity of which he is the reflection: intelligence, soul, and body. If the soul is united with the intelligence it attains to *Sattva*, wisdom and peace; if it remains uncertain between the intelligence and the body, it is dominated by *Rajas*, passion, and turns from object to object in a fatal circle; if it abandons itself to the body it falls into *Tamas*,

[1] The assertion of this doctrine, which later became that of Plato, is found in the first book of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, in the form of a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna.

want of reason, ignorance, and temporary death. This every man may observe in and around himself.[1]

"But what is the fate of the soul?" asked Arjuna, "after death? Does it always obey the same law, or can it escape from the law?"

"It never escapes, but obeys it always," replied Krishna. "This is the mystery of rebirths. As the depths of heaven are laid bare before the starry rays, so the depths of life light up beneath the glory of this truth. When the body is dissolved, when *Sattva* is in the ascendant, the soul flies away into the region of those pure beings who have knowledge of the Sublime. When the body experiences this dissolution whilst *Rajas* dominates, the soul once more comes to live amongst those who have bound themselves to things of earth. Again, if the body is destroyed when *Tamas* dominates, the soul, whose radiance is dimmed by matter, is again attracted by the wombs of irrational beings."[2]

"That is just," said Arjuna. "Now tell us what happens, as the centuries roll on, to those who have followed the path of wisdom, and who dwell in divine worlds after death?"

[1] Books xiii. to xviii., *Bhagavad-Gita*.
[2] *Bhagavad-Gita*, chapter xiv.

"The devout man, surprised by death," replied Krishna, "after enjoying for several centuries the due rewards of his virtues in superior realms of bliss, finally returns again to inhabit a body in some holy and respectable family. But this kind of regeneration in this life is very difficult to attain. The man thus born again finds himself possessed of the same degree of application and advancement, as regards the intellect, as he had in his first body, and he begins to work afresh to attain perfection in devotion."

"So even the good," said Arjuna, "are forced to be born again and recommence the life of the body! But tell us, O Lord of Life, if there is no end to the eternal rebirths for the one who pursues wisdom?"

"Listen," said Krishna, "hear a mighty and profound secret, the sublime and sovereign mystery. To attain to perfection one must acquire *the knowledge of unity*, which is above wisdom; one must rise to the divine Being who is above the soul, above the intelligence. This divine Being, this sublime Friend is in each one of us. God dwells within each man, though few can find Him. This is the path of salvation. Once thou hast perceived the perfect Being, who is above the world and within thyself, do thou decide to abandon the

enemy, which takes the form of desire. Control thy passions. The joys afforded by the senses are like wombs of future sufferings. Not only do good, but be good. Let the motive be in the action, not in its fruits. Abandon the fruit of thy works, but let each action be as an offering to the supreme Being. The man who sacrifices his desires and works to the Being whence proceed the beginnings of all things, and by whom the universe has been formed, attains to perfection by this sacrifice. One in spirit, he acquires that spiritual wisdom which is above the worship of offerings, and experiences a felicity divine. For he who within himself finds his happiness, his joy, and light, is one with God. Know then that the soul which has found God is freed from rebirth and death, old age and grief. Such a soul drinks the waters of immortality."[1]

Thus Krishna explained his doctrine to his disciples; by inner contemplation he gradually raised them to the sublime truths which had been opened out to himself in the lightning-flash of his vision. When he spake of Mahâdeva his voice became more serious in tone, and his countenance lit up. One day Arjuna, overcome by curiosity, asked boldly:

[1] *Bhagavad-Gita.*

"Show us Mahâdeva in his divine form. Can our eyes behold him?"

Then Krishna rose and began to speak of the Being who breathes in all beings, of a hundred thousand shapes, countless eyes, and faces turning in every direction, who yet surpasses them all by the very height of infinity; who in his motionless and limitless body encloses the moving universe with all its divisions. "If there were to burst forth simultaneously in the heavens the glory of a thousand suns," said Krishna, "it would bear but a faint resemblance to the splendour of the one All-Mighty." As he thus spoke of Mahâdeva, so glorious a ray of light beamed forth from Krishna's eyes that the disciples could not bear its brilliancy, but threw themselves down at his feet. Arjuna's hair stood on end, and with bowed head and clasped hands he said: "Master, thy words terrify us, we cannot endure the sight of the great Being thou hast summoned up before us. It utterly confounds us."[1]

Krishna replied: "Listen to what he tells you by my mouth: You and I have had several births. Mine are known only to myself, you do not know

[1] See this transfiguration of Krishna in Book xi. of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. It may be compared with the transfiguration of Jesus in the 17th chapter of St. Matthew. See also Book viii. of the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

yours. Although I am not by nature subject to birth or death, and am master of all creatures, yet, since I control my nature, I render myself visible by my own power, and every time virtue declines throughout the world, and vice and injustice gain the upper hand, then I make myself visible, and thus appear from age to age for the salvation of the just, the destruction of the wicked, and the re-establishment of virtue. He who knows, in truth, my nature and my divine work, leaving his body, does not return to a new birth: he comes to me."[1]

As he thus spake, Krishna cast a look of benevolence and love on his disciples. Arjuna exclaimed:

"Lord, thou art our master, thou art the son of Mahâdeva! I see it by thy goodness and ineffable charm even more than by the awful majesty of thy glory. It is not on the giddy heights of infinity that the Devas seek and desire thee; it is under human form that they love and adore thee. Neither penitence nor alms-giving, Vedas nor sacrifice, avail to obtain a single look from thee. Thou art truth. Lead us to the strife, to combat and death. Whithersoever thou wishest, we will follow thee!"

[1] *Bhagavad-Gita*, Book iv.

With countenances beaming in enraptured delight, the disciples crowded round Krishna, saying:

"Why did we not see thee sooner? It is Mahâdeva speaking in thee."

He replied:

"Your eyes were not opened; I have given you the great secret. Say it only to such as are capable of understanding it. You are my elect; you see the goal, the crowd sees only a portion of the path. Now let us go and preach the way of salvation to the people."

CHAPTER VII

TRIUMPH AND DEATH

AFTER instructing his disciples on Mount Merou, Krishna betook himself with them to the banks of the Jamuna and the Ganges, to convert the people. He entered into huts, and tarried awhile in the various towns. When evening came, the multitudes grouped around him on the outskirts of the villages. What he preached more particularly to the people was love to one's neighbour. "The evils we inflict on our neighbour," he said, "follow us, as the shadow follows the body. Such works as have their root in love for one's fellowmen should be the object of the righteous man's ambition, for they will weigh heaviest in the heavenly balance. If thou keepest company with the good, thy example will be fruitless ; fear not to live among the wicked, to bring them to the light. The virtuous man is like the gigantic banyan-tree, whose beneficent shade affords the fragrance of life to the surrounding plants." At times, Krishna, whose soul was now overflowing with the perfume of love,

spoke in gentle and seductive images of abnegation and sacrifice. "Just as the earth tolerates those who trample her under foot, and tear open her bosom by the plough, so ought we to render good for evil. . . . The honest man must fall beneath the strokes of the wicked, just as the sandal-tree, which gives its perfume to the axe that strikes it to the ground."

When the demi-savants, the incredulous, and the proud, asked him to explain to them the nature of God, he replied by such sentences as these : "Man's knowledge is only vanity ; all his good actions are illusory when he does not lay them down before the feet of God. He who is humble in heart and mind is loved of God, he needs nothing besides. Infinity and space alone can comprehend the infinite. God alone can comprehend God."

These were the only new doctrines he taught. He delighted and filled with enthusiasm the multitudes especially, for he spoke of the living God, of Vishnou. He taught that the master of the universe had already once more become incarnate amongst men. He had appeared successively in the seven Rishis, in Vyasa, and in Vasishta. He would appear again. But Vishnou, so Krishna said, was pleased at times to speak through the mouths of the lowly, a beggar, a repentant woman,

a little child. He related the parable of the poor fisherman, Dourga, who had met a small child dying of hunger at the foot of a tamarind tree. . . . The kind-hearted Dourga, though extremely poor, and burdened with a numerous family, which he knew not how to bring up, was filled with pity for the starving child, and took him home. The sun had set, and the moon was rising over the Ganges; the family had repeated their evening prayer, and the small child murmured gently: "As the fruit of the cataca purifies the water, so do good deeds purify the soul. Take thy nets, Dourga, thy bark is floating on the Ganges." Dourga cast his nets, which bent beneath the number of fish they contained. The child had disappeared. "Thus," said Krishna, "when man forgets his own misery to think of others' sufferings, Vishnou manifests himself and makes him happy in heart." By such examples Krishna preached the worship of Vishnou. Whilst Devaki's son was speaking, every one was amazed to find God so near his own heart.

The fame of the prophet of Mount Merou spread throughout India. The shepherds who had known him in childhood and had witnessed his early deeds of prowess, could not believe that this holy personage was the impetuous hero of former days. Old Nanda was dead, but his two daughters,

Sarasvati and Nichdali, beloved of Krishna, were still living. Diverse had been their destinies. Sarasvati, exasperated at Krishna's departure, had sought forgetfulness in marriage. She had become the wife of a man of noble caste, who had espoused her for her beauty. Afterwards he had put her away, and sold her to a merchant. In disgust, Sarasvati had left this man to become a woman of evil fame. One day, feeling depressed and down-hearted, overcome by remorse, she returned home to her native village, and secretly called on her sister Nichdali. The latter, ever thinking of Krishna as though he were present, had remained unmarried, and was living as servant to her brother. When Sarasvati had told her sister all the misfortune and shame that had befallen her, Nichdali replied :

"My poor sister, I pardon thee, but my brother will never do so. Krishna alone can save thee."

A light shone in Sarasvati's dull, lack-lustre eyes.

"Krishna!" she said, "what has become of him?"

"He is now a saint, a mighty prophet. He preaches on the banks of the Ganges."

"Let us go and find him!" said Sarasvati.

Whereupon the two sisters set out, the one blighted with passion, the other in the sweet per-

fume of innocence, and yet both consoled by the same love.

Krishna was engaged in preaching his doctrine to the warriors or kshatryas. He discoursed to the Brahmans, the men of the military caste, and the common people in turn. To the Brahmans he explained, with all the calmness of ripened age, the profound truths of divine science; in presence of the rajahs he celebrated warlike and family virtues with the ardent fire of youth; whilst to the common people he spake of charity, resignation, and hope, with all the simplicity of childhood.

Krishna was present at a feast given by a renowned chief, when two women asked to be brought to the prophet. Permission to enter was given them, by reason of their penitents' robes. Sarasvati and Nichdali threw themselves at Krishna's feet. The former, with tears running down her cheeks, said:

"Ever since thou hast left us, my life has been passed in error and sin; but, if thou wilt, Krishna, thou canst save me! . . ."

Nichdali added:

"O Krishna! long, long ago, when I saw thee, I knew I loved thee for ever; now that I find thee again in thy glory, I know thou art the son of Mahâdeva!"

Then they both kissed his feet. The rajahs said:

"Why, holy Rishi, dost thou permit these women of the people to insult thee with insensate words?"

Krishna replied:

"Let them open their hearts to me; in truth they are better than you are. The one possesses faith, and the other love. Sarasvati, the erring sinner, is saved from henceforth because she believes in me, and Nichdali, in her silence, has shown herself a greater lover of truth than you with all your loud professions. Know that my radiant mother, who abides in the sun of Mahâdeva, will teach her the mysteries of eternal love when you are all still plunged in the darkness of lower lives."

From that day Sarasvati and Nichdali followed Krishna's footsteps, along with the rest of his disciples. Inspired by him, they taught the other women.

Kansa still reigned at Mathura. Since the murder of Vasishta, the king on his throne had found no peace. The anchorite's prophecy had been realised—Devaki's son was living! The king had seen him, and before his look he had felt his might and royalty dwindle away into insignificance. He trembled for his life, like a dry leaf; and often would he turn round in sudden fear,

notwithstanding that his guards were ever by his side, expecting to see the youthful hero in awful glory standing in the doorway. . . . Nysoumba, on the other hand, rolling about on her couch in the gynaeceum, reflected gloomily over her lost powers. When she heard that Krishna, now a prophet, was preaching on the banks of the Ganges, she persuaded the king to send against him a troop of soldiers to bring him bound before her. When Krishna saw them, he smiled and said:

"I know who you are, and why you have come here. I am ready to follow you to your king; but, first of all, let me speak to you of the king of heaven, my own king."

Then he began to speak of Mahâdeva, and his glorious manifestations. When he had finished, the soldiers gave up their weapons to Krishna, saying:

"We will not take thee prisoner to our king, but we will follow thee to thine own king."

They remained by his side, at which news, when he heard it, Kansa was greatly troubled. Nysoumba said to him:

"Send the first men in the kingdom."

This was done, and they proceeded to the town where Krishna was teaching. They had promised not to listen to him, but when they saw the glory

of his look, his majestic mien, and the respect shown him by the multitudes, they could not help paying attention to the words he uttered. Krishna spoke to them of the inner slavery of such as do evil, and of the heavenly liberty enjoyed by such as do good. The kshatryas were filled with surprise and gladness, for they seemed to feel that an enormous weight had been lifted from their minds.

"Truly thou art a mighty magician," they said, "for we had sworn to take thee before the king, loaded with iron chains. Now, however, it is impossible for us to do this, as thou hast delivered us from our own bonds."

Returning to Kansa, they said to him:

"We cannot bring this man to thee. He is a mighty prophet, and thou hast nothing to fear from him."

The king, seeing that everything was useless, had his guards tripled, and iron chains placed on all the gates of his palace. One day, however, he heard a mighty sound in the town, cries of joy and triumph. The guards came to him and said: "It is Krishna entering Mathura. The people are bursting open the gates and breaking the iron chains." Kansa wished to escape, but his very guards forced him to remain on his throne.

It was indeed Krishna who, followed by his

disciples and a numerous company of anchorites, was making a triumphal entry into Mathura. The city was decked with flags, and filled with a mighty multitude resembling a storm-tossed sea. He proceeded amidst a shower of garlands and flowers: universal was the acclamation he received. In front of the temples stood groups of Brahmans beneath the sacred banyan-trees, to greet Devaki's son, the slayer of the serpent, the hero of Mount Merou, but especially the prophet of Vishnou. Followed by a brilliant procession, and saluted as a liberator by both people and kshatryas, Krishna appeared before king and queen.

"Thou hast reigned only by violence and evil," said Krishna to Kansa, "and thou hast deserved a thousand deaths for having killed the old saint Vasishta. But thou shalt not die yet; I wish to prove to the world that it is not by slaying but by pardoning one's conquered foes that one really triumphs over them."

"Wicked magician!" said Kansa, "thou hast robbed me of my crown and my kingdom. Take the rest."

"Thou speakest like a madman," said Krishna. "Wert thou to perish in thy present condition of folly and hardened crime, thou wouldst be irrevocably lost in the other life. On the contrary,

if thou wilt begin to comprehend thy foolishness and to repent now, thy punishment shall be less in the next life, and, through the mediation of pure spirits, Mahâdeva will one day save thee."

Nysoumba, leaning over, whispered into the king's ear :

"Insensate ! Profit by this foolish pride of his. While life lasts the hope of vengeance remains."

Krishna, though he had not heard, understood what she had said. With stern, though pitiful glance, he said :

"Wicked woman, ever instilling thy poison into thy companion's soul ! Black magician, corruptress as thou art, thy mind has now no room for anything but serpent's venom. Extirpate this poison, for if thou dost not, I shall some day be compelled to bruise thy head. Now, thou shalt accompany the king to a place of penitence, there to expiate thy crimes, beneath the watchful guard of the Brahmans."

After these events, Krishna, with the consent of the people and the first men in the kingdom, consecrated Arjuna, his disciple, the most illustrious descendant of the solar race, as King of Mathura. He gave supreme authority to the Brahmans, who became teachers of the kings. He himself remained chief of the anchorites, who formed the

upper council of the Brahmans. To prevent this council being persecuted, he caused a strong town to be built in the midst of the mountains, defended by a lofty enclosure and a chosen population. It was called Dwarka. In the centre of the town was the temple of the initiates, the most important part of which was concealed underground.[1]

When the kings of the lunar cult heard that a king of the solar cult had once more mounted the throne of Mathura, and that the Brahmans, through him, would become masters of India, they formed a powerful league to overthrow him. Arjuna, on his side, grouped around him all the kings of the solar cult, of the white Aryan Vedic tradition. From the depths of the temple of Dwarka, Krishna followed and directed them. The two armies were

[1] The *Vishnou-Pourana*, Book v., chapters xxii. and xxx., mentions this town: "Krishna accordingly determined to build a citadel in which the tribe of Yadou should find a sure refuge, and of such a nature that the women themselves could defend it. The town of Dwarka was protected by raised bulwarks, embellished by gardens and reservoirs, and beautiful as Amaravati, the city of Indra." In this town he planted the tree Parajata, "whose fragrant perfume embalms the land all around. All such as approached it, found themselves capable of remembering their former existence." This tree is evidently the symbol of divine science and initiation; the same is found in the Chaldean tradition, passing thence into the Hebrew genesis. After the death of Krishna, the town is submerged, the tree ascends to heaven, but the temple remains. If all this has any historical signification, it means to one acquainted with the ultra-symbolic and prudent language of the Hindus, that some tyrant or other had the city razed to the ground, and that initiation became more and more secret.

face to face, and the decisive battle imminent. Arjuna, no longer having his master by his side, felt his mind troubled and courage failing. One morning, at daybreak, Krishna appeared before the tent of the king, his disciple.

"Wherefore hast thou not begun the fight which is to decide whether the sons of the moon, or those of the sun, shall rule over the earth?" asked the master sternly.

"Without thee I cannot begin," said Arjuna. "Look at these two immense armies, and these multitudes, on the point of slaying one another."

From the eminence on which they were standing, the Lord of Spirits and the King of Mathura looked down on the two mighty hosts, arrayed in perfect order in front of one another. The golden coats of mail of the chiefs shone brilliantly; whilst thousands of foot-soldiers and of horses and elephants awaited the signal of battle. At this moment the chief of the opposing host, the oldest of the Kouravas, blew a blast from his marine shell, whose sound resembled the roaring of a lion. Then suddenly might be heard throughout the vast battlefield the neighings of horses, a confused sound of arms, drums, and trumpets . . . a mighty uproar. Arjuna had only to mount his chariot, drawn by a pair of white horses, and send forth a

blast from his sky-blue shell as a signal of battle to the sons of the sun. But the king was overcome with pity, and said in great dejection:

"When I see this multitude of men come to blows, I feel my limbs fail me, my tongue cleaves to the roof of my mouth, my body trembles, my hair stands on end, and my mind is in a whirl of indecision. I see evil omens; no good can come from this massacre. What can we do with kingdoms and pleasures, or even with life itself? The very men for whom we desire kingdoms and pleasures and joys are standing here, ready to fight, forgetting life and property. Teachers, fathers, sons, grandfathers, uncles and grandchildren, are on the point of slaying one another. I have no wish to slay them so as to rule over the three worlds, much less then to rule over this land. What pleasure should I find in killing my enemies? Once the rebels are dead, the sin would recoil on ourselves."

"How this scourge of fear, so unworthy of a sage, a source of heaven-expelling shame, has taken possession of thee!" said Krishna. "Be no longer weak and woman-like. Up!"

But Arjuna, dismayed and heartless, sat down and said:

"I will not engage in combat."

Then Krishna, king of spirits, gently smiling, continued:

"O Arjuna! I have called thee king over sleep, that thy spirit be ever awake. But thy spirit has sunk into slumber, thy body has overcome thy soul. Thou bewailest those who ought not to be wept over, and thy words are void of understanding. The wise among men mourn over neither the living nor the dead. Both thyself, and myself, and these commanders of men, have always existed, nor shall they ever cease to live. As in this body the soul experiences childhood, youth, and old age, so shall it have similar experiences in other bodies. A man of discretion does not trouble himself on that account. Son of Bhârat! endure pain and pleasure with equanimity. Such as this fate does not touch are deserving of immortality. Those who see the real essence of things see the eternal truth which dominates soul and body. Be it known unto thee that what passes through all things cannot be destroyed. None can destroy the Inexhaustible; thou knowest well that these bodies shall not endure. But the seers also know that the incarnate soul is eternal, indestructible, and infinite. This is the reason thou must go to the fight, descendant of Bhârat! Those who believe that the soul can either slay or be slain are alike mistaken. It neither kills nor dies. It is

not born, nor does it depart this life; neither can it lose that being it has always had. Just as one throws away old gowns to put on new ones, so the incarnate soul throws aside its body to take on others. Sword cannot cut it nor fire burn, water cannot moisten nor air dry its essence. It is impermeable and incombustible. Eternally firm and lasting, it interpenetrates everything. Accordingly, thou oughtest not to trouble thyself regarding either birth or death, Arjuna! Death is certain for him who is born, and birth is certain for him who dies. Look to thy duty without faltering. For a kshatrya there is nothing better than a righteous combat. Happy the warriors who find battle to be a gate opening into heaven! But if thou wilt not fight this just fight, thou wilt fall into sin, forsaking both thy duty and thy fame. All beings will speak of thy eternal baseness, for infamy is worse than death to the man who has experienced honour."[1]

On hearing these words of the master, Arjuna was overcome with shame, and felt his royal blood course bravely through his veins. Springing forward into his chariot, he gave the signal for the fight. Then Krishna bade his disciple farewell, and left the field of battle, certain beforehand of the victory the sons of the sun would win.

[1] The beginning of the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

All the same, Krishna saw that, in order to have his religion accepted by the conquered, a final victory, more difficult than that of arms, must be gained over their souls. Just as the saint Vasishta had died pierced by an arrow to reveal the supreme truth to Krishna, so Krishna was to die of his own free-will beneath the stroke of his mortal enemy, in order to plant the faith he had preached to his disciples and to the world even in the hearts of his enemies. He knew that the former King of Mathura, far from showing a spirit of penitence, had taken refuge with his father-in-law Kalayavana, king of the serpents. His hatred, ever whetted by Nysoumba, caused Krishna to be followed by spies, who sought a favourable opportunity for striking him. Krishna now felt that his mission was over, and needed, for its perfect accomplishment, only the final seal of sacrifice. Accordingly, he ceased avoiding and paralysing his enemy by the might of his will. He knew that if he no longer defended himself by this occult power, the long-meditated blow would strike him in secret. But the son of Devaki wished to die far from the haunts of men, away in the solitude of the Himavat. There he would feel himself nearer his radiant mother, the sublime old man, and the sun of Mahâdeva.

So Krishna set out for a hermitage in a lonely,

desolate spot, at the foot of the lofty peaks of the Himavat. None of his disciples had guessed his purpose. Sarasvati and Nichdali alone read it in the master's eyes by the divining instinct of woman's love. When Sarasvati understood that it was his will to die, flinging herself at his feet, she kissed them passionately, and exclaimed:

"Master, do not forsake us!"

Nichdali looked up at him, and said simply:

"I know where thou goest; if we have loved thee, give us leave to follow thee!"

Krishna replied:

"In my heaven, love shall be refused nothing. Come!"

After a long journey, the prophet and the holy women reached a few huts grouped around a large cedar, stripped of its bark, on a rocky, yellowish mountain. On one side could be seen the immense snow-white domes of the Himavat, on the other a labyrinth of mountains, whilst away in the distance stretched the plain of India, lost like a dream in a golden mist. In this hermitage lived a few penitents, clothed in coverings of bark, with hair and beard long and untrimmed, their bodies all defiled with mud and dust, whilst their limbs had shrunk beneath the heat of the sun and the wind of heaven. Certain of them resembled a tightly-

drawn skin covering a dry skeleton. On seeing this desolate spot, Sarasvati exclaimed :

"The earth is far behind, and heaven is dumb. O Lord ! wherefore hast thou brought us to this wilderness forsaken by god and man ? "

"Pray ! " replied Krishna, "if thou wishest the earth to draw near and heaven to speak to thee."

"With thee, heaven is always at hand," said Nichdali ; "but wherefore is it now to leave us ? "

"The son of Mahâdeva," said Krishna, "must die, pierced by an arrow, for the world to believe in his message."

"Explain this mystery to us."

"You will understand it after my death. Let us pray."

For seven days they prayed and performed ablutions. Krishna's face was often transfigured, and appeared shining in radiant bliss. On the seventh day, about sunset, the two women saw a band of archers mount to the hermitage.

"These are Kansa's bowmen seeking thee," said Sarasvati. "Master, defend thyself."

Krishna, however, on his knees at the foot of the cedar, continued praying. The archers came up and saw the women and the penitents. They were rough soldiers, some with yellow and others with black faces, and when they beheld the ecstatic

countenance of the saint, they stood still in amazement. At first they tried to draw him from his transport of rapture by questions and insults, and finally by hurling stones at him. Nothing, however, availed to change his attitude. Then they flung themselves upon him and bound him to the trunk of a cedar. Krishna, like one in a dream, offered no resistance. Then the archers, retiring to a distance, began inciting one another to shoot at him. When the first arrow had pierced his flesh the blood gushed forth, and Krishna exclaimed: "Vasishta, the sons of the sun are victorious!" When the second arrow was quivering in his body, he said: "My radiant mother, grant that those who love me enter with me into thy light!" At the third, he simply uttered the word, "Mahâdeva!" Then, with the name of Brahma on his lips, he gave up the ghost.

The sun had set. A mighty wind arose: a snow-storm came from the Himavat and beat down on the earth. The sky was veiled from sight, and a black whirlwind swept over the mountains. Terrified at what they had done, the murderers took to flight, and the two women, frozen with fear, lay unconscious on the ground, as though beneath a shower of blood.

Krishna's body was buried by his disciples in

the holy town of Dwarka. Sarasvati and Nichdali flung themselves on the funeral pile to rejoin their master, and the multitudes believed they saw the son of Mahâdeva issue from the flames in a body of light, taking away with him his two brides.

After these events, a great part of India adopted the worship of Vishnou, which blended the solar and the lunar cults in the religion of Brahma.

CHAPTER VIII

RADIANCE OF THE SOLAR WORD

SUCH is the legend of Krishna, reconstituted in its organic entirety, and reset in the perspective of history.

It throws a vivid light on the origin of Brahmanism. Naturally, it is impossible to affirm by positive documents that a real personage is hidden beneath the myth of Krishna. The threefold veil which masks the birth of all oriental religions is darker in India than elsewhere, for the Brahmans, absolute controllers of Hindu society, sole guardians of its traditions, have modelled and changed them often in the course of the ages. It is just, however, to add that they have faithfully preserved all its elements, and, if their secret teaching has developed with the centuries, its centre has never been disturbed. It would consequently be impossible to explain a character like that of Krishna by saying, as do the majority of European savants: "It is an old nurse's tale added on to a solar myth, with a dash of philosophic fancy dabbed on to

the whole." Such is not the foundation, we may be sure, of a religion which lasts thousands of years, gives birth to a wonderful poetry and several mighty systems of philosophy, resists the formidable attack of Bouddhism,[1] the Mongolian and Mahometan invasions, the English conquest, and even in its decadence retains the sentiment of its lofty origin, lost in the mists of time. No, there is always a great man at the birth of a mighty institution. Considering the dominant rôle of Krishna's personage, in epic and religious tradition, his human side on the one hand, and on the other his constant identification with God in manifestation or Vishnou, we are compelled to believe that he was the creator of the Vishnouite cult, which gave Brahmanism the virtue and prestige to which it attained. Accordingly, it is logical to admit that in the midst of the religious and social chaos created in primitive India by the invasion of

[1] The greatness of Sâkyamuni dwells in his sublime charity, his moral reforms, and the social revolution he effected by the overthrowing of ossified castes. The Bouddha gave to a decrepit Brahmanism a shock similar to that given by Protestantism to the Catholic world three hundred years ago; he forced it to gird up its loins for the fight, to enter upon a new lease of life. But Sâkyamuni added nothing to the esoteric doctrine of the Brahmans; he merely divulged certain portions of it. His psychology is, at bottom, the same although it follows a different path. (See my article on "La Légende de Bouddha," *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1ier juillet, 1885.)

naturalistic and passional cults, there appeared a luminous reformer who renewed the pure Aryan doctrine by the idea of the trinity and the manifested divine Word, set the seal to his work by the sacrifice of his life, and thus gave to India its religious soul, a national mould, and a definite organisation.

The importance of Krishna appears to us even greater, and of a really universal character, if we note that his doctrine contains two primitive ideas, two organising principles for religious and esoteric philosophy. I mean the organic doctrine of the immortality of the soul or of progressive existences by reincarnation, and the corresponding one of the trinity or of the divine Word revealed in man. I have merely hinted, a few pages back,[1] at the philosophical bearing of this central conception, which, when well understood, finds its animating repercussion in every domain of science, art, and life. In conclusion, I will merely give a historical note.

The idea that God, Truth, Infinite Beauty and Goodness are revealed in conscious man with a redeeming power which springs to the very heights of heaven by the might of love and sacrifice, an idea, fruitful beyond all others, appears for the first

[1] See note on Devaki, with reference to Krishna's vision.

time in Krishna. It is personified when, issuing from its Aryan youth, mankind plunges more and more into the worship of matter. Krishna reveals to men the idea of the divine Word; never more will they forget it. They will have only the greater desire for redeemers and sons of God as they are the more profoundly conscious of their own loss. After Krishna, there passes a powerful radiation, so to speak, of the solar Word, through the temples of Asia, of Africa, and of Europe. In Persia we have Mithras, the reconciler of the luminous Ormuzd and of the sombre Ahrimanes; in Egypt, Horus, son of Osiris and Isis; in Greece, Apollo, god of the sun and of the lyre; Dionysos, who roused souls to life. Everywhere the solar god is a mediatorial god, and the light is also the word of life. Then is it not from this light-giving word of life that the Messianic idea springs forth? In any case, it was by Krishna that this idea entered the ancient world; it is by Jesus that it is to shed its rays throughout the whole earth.

It is my object to show how the doctrine of the divine ternary is linked with that of the soul and of its evolution, how and why they take one another for granted, the one completing the other. Let me say at once that their point of contact forms the vital centre, the light-giving focus of esoteric

doctrine. Looking at the mighty religions of India, Egypt, Greece, and Judæa only from the outside, nothing but discord, superstition, and chaos can be seen. But if one examines the symbols, questions the mysteries, and searches out the root-idea of the founders and of the prophets . . . harmony will be seen throughout. Along divers and often winding paths one will reach the same point, so that penetration into the arcanum of one of these religions means entrance into the secrets of the rest. Then a strange phenomenon takes place. By degrees, but in a widening circle, the doctrine of the initiates is seen to shine forth in the centre of the religions, like a sun clearing away its nebula. Each religion appears as a different planet. With each we change both atmosphere and celestial orientation ; still, it is always the same sun which illumines us. India, the mighty dreamer, plunges us along with herself into the dream of eternity. . . . Egypt, sublime and imposing, austere as death, invites us to the journey beyond the grave. Enchanting Greece sweeps us along to the magic feasts of life, and gives to her mysteries the seduction of her form, charming or terrible in turn, and of her ever-passionate soul. Finally, Pythagoras scientifically formulates the esoteric doctrine, gives it perhaps the most complete and

concise expression it has ever had; Plato and the Alexandrians were merely its vulgarisers. We have now seen the source of this doctrine in the jungles of the Ganges and the solitudes of the Himalayas.

HERMES

(THE MYSTERIES OF EGYPT)

Blind soul! Arm thyself with the torch of the Mysteries, and in the night of earth shalt thou uncover thy luminous Double, thy celestial Soul. Follow this divine guide and let him be thy Genius, for he holds the key of thy lives, both past and to come.

Appeal to the Initiates (from the *Book of the Dead*).

Listen within yourselves and look into the infinitude of Space and Time. There can be heard the songs of the Constellations, the voices of the Numbers, and the harmonies of the Spheres.

Each sun is a thought of God and each planet a mode of that thought. To know divine thought, O souls, you descend and painfully ascend the path of the seven planets and of their seven heavens.

What do the Constellations? What say the Numbers? What revolve the Spheres? O lost or saved souls, they speak, they sing, they roll . . . your destinies!

Fragment (from Hermes).

HERMES

CHAPTER I

THE SPHINX

In the ancient world, Egypt was a veritable citadel of sacred science, a school for its most illustrious prophets and a refuge for the noblest traditions of mankind. Thanks to the immense excavations and investigations of recent years, the people of Egypt are better known to us at the present time than any of the civilisations that preceded Greece; its history is revealed, written on pages of stone. In spite, however, of the fact that its monuments have been cleared of the accumulations of ages, and its hieroglyphs deciphered, we have not succeeded in penetrating to the deepest secrets of its thought, the occult teachings of its priests. This teaching, scientifically expounded in the temples and prudently veiled beneath the mysteries, shows us at a glance the soul of Egypt, the secret of its politics, and the important part it has played in the world's history.

Our historians speak in the same breath of the Pharaohs as they do of the despots of Nineveh and Babylon. To them Egypt is an absolute and conquering monarchy, like Assyria, from which it differs merely in that it has lasted a few thousand years more. Do they know that in Assyria royalty utterly crushed the priesthood to make an instrument of it, whilst in Egypt the priesthood disciplined royalty and never abdicated even at the worst times, imposing itself on the kings, driving out the despots, never ceasing to govern the nation; and all this by means of an intellectual superiority, a profound and secret wisdom which no teaching body has ever equalled in any country or at any period? I scarcely think they do, for instead of drawing innumerable conclusions from this essential fact, our historians have scarcely noticed it and appear to attach no importance whatever to it. And yet, one need be neither an archæologist nor a linguist to understand that the implacable hatred that existed between Assyria and Egypt comes from the fact that these two nations represented two opposing principles, and that the Egyptian nation was indebted for its long duration to a religious and scientific hardening process stronger than any revolution.

From the Aryan epoch right through the stormy

period following the Vedic times on to the Persian conquest and the Alexandrine epoch, that is to say, during more than five thousand years, Egypt was the stronghold of those lofty and pure doctrines, the total of which constitutes the science of principles and may be called the esoteric orthodoxy of antiquity. What if fifty dynasties succeeded one another and the Nile piled its alluvial soil over entire cities; what if the Phœnicians in turn inundated and were driven out of the country; through the ebb and flow of history, Egypt, beneath the apparent idolatry of her exterior polytheism, ever retained the old foundation of her occult theogony and sacerdotal organisation. She resisted the flight of time as does the pyramid of Gizeh, whole and intact, though half buried beneath the sand. Thanks to that secret sphinx-like immobility, that granite resistance, Egypt became the axis round which rolled the religious thought of humanity as it passed from Asia into Europe. Judæa, Greece, Etruria were so many living souls which formed different civilisations. But from what source did they draw their root-ideas if not from the organic reserve of ancient Egypt? Moses and Orpheus founded two distinct and wonderful religions, the one distinguished by its fierce monotheism, the other by a dazzling polytheism. Where did the

one find the strength, the energy, and the boldness necessary to recast, like brass in a furnace, a half-savage nation, and where did the other acquire the magical power of making the gods speak, like a well-tuned lyre, to the soul of its charmed barbarian races? In the temples of Osiris, in ancient Thebes, which the initiates called the city of the sun or the solar Ark—because it contained the synthesis of divine science and all the secrets of initiation.

Every year, at the summer solstice, when a deluge of rain pours down in Abyssinia, the Nile changes colour, assuming the blood-red tint of which the Bible speaks. The river remains swollen until the autumn equinox, burying beneath its waves the horizon of its banks. Standing on their granite table-lands, beneath the blinding sun, the temples cut out of the solid rock, the necropoles and the pyramids reflect their majestic ruins in the Nile, now changed into a sea. The Egyptian priesthood has gone through the ages, taking with it its organisation and its symbols, the secrets—so long impenetrable—of its science. Within these temples, crypts, and pyramids was developed the famous doctrine of the Logos-Light, the universal Word which Moses was to enclose within his golden ark, and of which Christ was to be the living torch.

Truth is immutable in itself; it alone survives everything though it changes abode as well as form and its revelations are intermittent. "The light of Osiris" which formerly threw light for the initiates over the depths of nature and the vaults of heaven, is extinguished for ever in the abandoned crypts. The saying of Hermes to Asclepius has been realised: "O Egypt! Egypt! There shall remain for thee for future generations only fables that no one will believe, nothing of thee shall endure except words cut out in stone."

All the same, we shall try to bring back to life one ray of this mysterious sun of the sanctuaries by pursuing the secret path of the Egyptian initiation of former times so far as esoteric intuition will allow.

Before entering the temple, however, let us cast a glance over the mighty phases Egypt passed through before the times of the Hyksos, or Shepherd dynasty.

The first Egyptian civilisation, almost as old as the very carcase of our continents, dates back to the ancient red race.[1] The colossal sphinx of

[1] In an inscription of the fourth dynasty, mention is made of the sphinx as being a monument whose origin was lost in the night of time, and that it had been found by chance in this reign, buried by the desert sand beneath which it had been forgotten for long generations, Fr. Lenormant, *Hist. d'Orient.* The

Gizeh, near the large pyramid, is its work. At the time when the Delta (formed at a later period by the alluvial deposits of the Nile) had not yet come into existence, this monstrous, symbolical animal was lying there on its granite hill, in front of the chain of the Lybian mountains, watching the sea dash at its feet on the very spot where now stretches a waste of desert sand. The sphinx, that first creation of Egypt, has become its principal symbol, its distinctive mark. The most ancient of all human priesthoods engraved it, an image of nature, calm and redoubtable in its mystery. The head of a man issues from the body of a bull with the claws of a lion, and presses its eagle's wings to its sides. This is terrestrial Isis, nature in the living unity of its reign. For these immemorial priesthoods even then knew and taught that, in the mighty scheme of evolution, the human emerges from the animal nature. In this compound of the bull, the lion, the eagle, and the man the four animals of the vision of Ezekiel are also contained, representing four elements that constitute the microcosm and the macrocosm, water, earth, air, and fire, the basis of occult science. This is why, in succeeding centuries, when initiates saw the

fourth dynasty carries us back to 4000 years before Christ. Judge, then, of the antiquity of the sphinx !

sacred animal, lying on the threshold of the temples or in the depths of the crypts, they could feel this mystery living within themselves and silently fold back the wings of their spirit over the inner truth. For long before Œdipus, they were to know that the key to the enigma of the sphinx was man, the microcosm, the divine agent, who sums up in himself all the elements and powers of nature.

The red race has left of itself no other witness than the sphinx of Gizeh, but this alone is an irrefutable proof that it had set itself and solved, in its own way, the mighty problem.

CHAPTER II

HERMES

The black race which succeeded the southern red race in the rule of the world made its principal sanctuary in Upper Egypt. The name of Hermes-Thoth, that mysterious, first initiator of Egypt into the secret doctrines, doubtless refers to a first and a pacific mingling of the white and the black races in the regions of Ethiopia and Upper Egypt, long before Aryan times. Hermes is a generic name, like Manou and Buddha. It means, at the same time, a man, a caste, and a god. As man, Hermes is the first, the mighty initiator of Egypt; as caste, it is the priesthood, guardian of occult traditions, whilst as god, it is the planet Mercury, assimilated to a whole category of spirits, divine initiators; in a word, Hermes presides over the supraterrestrial region of the celestial initiation. In the spiritual economy of the world, all these things are bound together by secret affinities as by an invisible thread. The name of Hermes is a talisman which sums them all up, a magic sound

evoking them into existence. Hence the prestige it possessed. The Greeks, disciples of the Egyptians, called him Hermes Trismegistus, or Thrice-Greatest Hermes, because he was looked upon as king, law-giver, and priest. He typifies a period in which the priesthood, the magistracy, and the kingship were united in a single governing body. The Egyptian chronology of Manetho calls this period the reign of the gods. There was then neither papyrus nor phonetic writing, but the sacred ideography was already in existence ; the science of the priesthood was inscribed in hieroglyphs on the columns and walls of the crypts. It passed later on into the libraries of the temples, considerably strengthened, and the Egyptians attributed to Hermes forty-two books dealing with occult science. The Greek book known as *Hermes Trismegistus* certainly contains relics, impaired, it is true, though infinitely precious, of ancient theogony, which is like the *fiat lux*, whence Moses and Orpheus received their first beams of light. The doctrine of the Fire-Principle and of the Word-Light, contained in the *Vision of Hermes*, will remain the summit and centre of Egyptian initiation.

We shall shortly endeavour to regain this vision of the masters, this mystic rose which blooms only

in the night of the sanctuary, and in the secret of the great religions. Certain sayings of Hermes, taken from the ancient wisdom, are well calculated to prepare us for this. "None of our thoughts," he said to his disciple Asclepius, "is capable of conceiving God, nor any language of defining Him. That which is incorporeal, formless, invisible, cannot be grasped by our senses; that which is eternal cannot be measured by the short rules of time. God is accordingly ineffable. True, He can communicate to certain elect the power to rise above material concerns, to perceive some radiance of His supreme perfection; but these elect can find no words to interpret into ordinary language the immaterial vision which has thrilled their inmost souls. They may explain to humanity the secondary causes of the creations which pass beneath their eyes as being images of universal life, but the first cause remains veiled and we shall succeed in understanding it only when we have passed through the portals of death." In such terms Hermes spoke of the unknown God at the entrance to the crypts. The disciples who penetrated with him into their depths, learnt to know him as a living being.[1]

[1] Learned and esoteric theology, says M. Maspéro, has been monotheistic ever since the times of the Ancient Empire. The

The book speaks of his death as of the departure of a god. "Hermes saw the totality of things, and having seen, understood, and having understood, had the power to manifest and reveal. What he thought, he wrote, what he wrote he most concealed, both wisely keeping silent and speaking, so that the whole duration of the world to come should seek these things. Thus, having commanded the gods, his brothers, to follow in his procession, he mounted to the stars." If need be, it is possible to isolate the political history of peoples, but not their religious history. The religions of Assyria, Egypt, Judæa, and Greece can only be understood when their union with the ancient Indo-Aryan religion is seen. Taken separately, they are so many puzzles and enigmas; seen together and from above, they form a glorious

affirmation of the fundamental unity of the Divine Being may be read in formal and energetic terms, in texts dating from this period. God is the only One, He who exists in essence, the only one living in substance, the sole generator in heaven and on earth who is not Himself engendered. At once Father, Mother, and Son, He engenders, brings to birth and is perpetually, and these three persons, far from dividing divine nature, work together to His infinite perfection. His attributes are immensity, eternity, independence, almighty will, boundless goodness. "He creates His own members which are the Gods" the old texts say. Each of these secondary gods, considered as identical with the one God, may form a new type, from which other inferior types emanate in turn and by the same process.—*Histoire ancienne des peuples de l'Orient.*

evolution in which everything is mutually controlled and explained. In a word, the history of a religion will always be narrow, superstitious, and false, truth is to be found only in the religious history of mankind. From these heights, only those currents which make the round of the globe can be felt. The Egyptian people, the most independent and exclusive of all to outside influences, could not escape this universal law. Five thousand years before our era, the light of Rama shed its rays over Egypt and became the law of Ammon-Rā, the solar god of Thebes. It was such a constitution that enabled it to brave so many revolutions. Menes was the first king of justice, the first Pharaoh to carry out this law. He took care not to remove from Egypt its former theology which was also his own. All he did was to confirm and expand it, adding to it a new social organisation. The priesthood, that is, the educational part of it, was assigned to a first chamber ; the administration of justice to another ; of government to the two ; royalty was conceived of as their delegation and under their control ; the relative independence of laws or townships was placed as the corner-stone of the society. This we may call the government of the initiates. It had as key-stone a synthesis of the sciences, known under the name of Osiris (O-Sir-Is),

the intellectual lord. The great pyramid is its symbol as is also the mathematical gnomon. The Pharaoh who received his initiation name from the temple, who exercised the sacerdotal and royal art on the throne, was quite a different personage from the Assyrian despot whose arbitrary power was based on crime and blood. The Pharaoh was the crowned initiate, or at any rate the pupil and instrument of the initiates. For centuries the Pharaohs are to defend against despotic Asia and anarchist Europe the law of the Ram which then represented the rights of justice and international arbitration.

About the year 2200 B.C. Egypt underwent the most redoubtable crisis any people can pass through : that of foreign invasion and semi-conquest. The Phœnician invasion itself was the consequence of the great religious schism in Asia which had stirred up the masses by sowing dissension in the temples. Led by the king-shepherds called Hyksos, the deluge of this invasion rolled over the Delta and Central Egypt. The schismatic kings brought with them a corrupted civilisation, Ionic effeminacy, and Asiatic luxury, the institution of the harem and gross idolatry. The very existence of Egypt was compromised, its intellectuality endangered and its world-wide mission threatened. Still it had a living

soul, that is to say, an organised body of initiates, guardians of the ancient science of Hermes and of Ammon-Rā. What became of this soul? It withdrew into the depths of its sanctuaries, concentrating its strength the better to resist the enemy. To outward appearance, the priesthood bowed before the invasion and openly recognised the usurpers who introduced the law of the Bull and the worship of Apis. And yet, concealed within their temples, the two councils guarded as a sacred charge their science and traditions, the ancient and undefiled religion, and along with it the hope of the restoration of the national dynasty. It was at this period that the priests spread among the people the legend of Isis and Osiris, the dismemberment of the latter and his coming resurrection by his son Horus, who found his scattered limbs which had been carried off by the Nile. The imagination of the people was stirred up by the pomp of public ceremonies. Their love for the old religion was kept alive by representing to them the misfortunes of the goddess, her lamentations at the loss of her celestial spouse, and the hope she placed in her son Horus, the divine mediator. At the same time, however, the initiates considered it necessary to make esoteric truth impossible to attack, by covering it over with a triple veil. The inner,

learned organisation of the lesser and the greater Mysteries corresponds with the diffusion of the popular worship of Isis and Osiris. They were girt around with terrible dangers and almost insuperable barriers. Moral tests were invented, the oath of silence exacted, and the penalty of death rigorously enforced against any initiates who divulged the slightest details of the Mysteries. Owing to this strict organisation, the Egyptian initiation became not merely the refuge of esoteric doctrine but also the crucible, the test of a national resurrection and the school of future religions. Whilst crowned usurpers were reigning at Memphis, Thebes was slowly preparing the regeneration of the country. From its temple and solar ark sprang the saviour of Egypt, Amos, who expelled the Hyksos, and restored to their rights Egyptian science and the male religion of Osiris.

In this way the Mysteries saved the soul of Egypt, beneath a foreign tyranny, and that for the good of humanity. Such at that time was the might of their discipline and the power of their initiation, that they consisted of the loftiest moral and intellectual forces in the land.

Ancient initiation rested on a conception of man at once grander and healthier than ours. We have separated the education of the body from that of

the mind and of the spirit. Our physical and natural sciences, though advanced in themselves, do not deal with the principle of the soul and its diffusion throughout the universe; our religion does not satisfy the needs of the intelligence; our medicine will know absolutely nothing of either soul or spirit. The men of the present day look for pleasure without happiness, happiness without science, and science without wisdom. The ancients would not allow the possibility of separating such things, in every domain of life they took into account the triple nature of man. Initiation was a gradual training of the whole human being to the lofty heights of the spirit whence the life could be dominated. "To attain to mastery," said the sages of the past, "man needs a total remodelling of his physical, moral, and intellectual nature. Now, this remodelling is possible only by the simultaneous exercise of will, intuition, and reasoning. By the complete agreement of these three, man can develop his faculties to incalculable limits. The soul possesses buried senses which initiation rouses to life. By profound study and constant application, man can place himself in conscious relation with the hidden forces of the universe. By a prodigious effort, he can attain to direct spiritual perception, open out for himself the paths of the

life beyond the grave, and render himself capable of travelling along these paths. Then only can he say that he has conquered destiny and acquired his divine liberty even here below. Then only can the initiate become an initiator, prophet, and theurgist, *i.e.* a seer and creator of souls. For only he who rules himself can rule others, only he who is free can set others free."

Such were the thoughts of the initiates of old, and the greatest among them lived and acted accordingly. Real initiation accordingly was anything but an empty dream or simple scientific teaching; it was the creation of a soul by itself, its birth on a higher plane, its blossoming in the divine world.

We will now imagine ourselves in the times of the Rameses, about the time when Moses and Orpheus were living, the year 1300 B.C., and endeavour to penetrate into the heart of Egyptian initiation. Figured monuments, the books of Hermes, and the Jewish and Greek traditions,[1] enable us to revive its main points and form some idea of its loftiest revelations.

[1] ΙΑΜΒΛΙΧΟΥ, *περὶ Μυστηρίων Λόγος.*

CHAPTER III

ISIS—THE INITIATION—THE TESTS

In the time of the Rameses, Egyptian civilisation had reached the acme of its glory. The Pharaohs of the twentieth dynasty, pupils and sword-bearers of the sanctuaries, continued, like true heroes, the struggle against Babylon. Egyptian archers harassed the Lybians and Numidians, right to the very centre of Africa. A fleet of four hundred sails pursued the league of the schismatics to the mouth of the Indus. The better to oppose Assyria and her allies, the Rameses had marked out strategic roads up to Lebanon and built a chain of forts between Mageddo and Karkemish. Architectural work continued without pause, keeping the workmen of three continents in constant employment. The hypostyle hall of Karnak, each pillar of which reaches the height of the Vendôme column, was repaired; the temple of Abydos was enriched with wonders in sculpture, and the valley of the kings with magnificent monuments. At Memphis

rose the Ramesseum, surrounded with a forest of obelisks, statues, and monoliths of enormous size.

In the midst of this feverish activity many a stranger from the distant shores of Asia Minor or the mountains of Thrace had come to Egypt to be initiated into her Mysteries, attracted by the reputation of her temples. On reaching Memphis, he stood still with wonderment and awe. Monuments and public fêtes, everything gave him an impression of opulence and grandeur. After the ceremony of the royal consecration, which took place in the secret places of the sanctuary, he saw the Pharaoh leave the temple in the presence of the crowd, and carried off by a dozen fan-bearers, officers of his staff. In front of him, twelve young Levites held the royal insignia on gold-embroidered cushions: the ram-headed sceptre of the arbiters, the sword, the ark, and the mace. Behind him came the king's household and the sacerdotal colleges, followed by initiates in the greater and lesser mysteries. The pontiffs wore white tiaras and their breasts flashed with the fire of symbolical stones. The dignitaries of the crown wore decorations of the Lamb, the Ram, the Lion, the Lily, and the Bee, hanging down from massive chains of admirable workmanship. City corporations closed the march,

with emblems and banners unfolded.[1] At night, boats gaily decked with flags, carried, on artificial lakes, the royal orchestras in whose midst could be seen female dancers, standing out in hieratic postures.

This crush and pomp, however, was not what he sought; it was the desire to penetrate the secret of things, the thirst of knowledge that had brought him from such a distance. He had been told that magi and hierophants, possessed of divine wisdom, lived in the sanctuaries of Egypt, and he too wished to enter into the secret of the gods. A priest of his country had spoken to him of the *Book of the Dead*, of the mysterious roll, placed beneath the heads of mummies, to serve as a viaticum, and relating in symbolic form the after-death journey of the soul, according to the priests of Ammon-Rā. With eager curiosity and a certain inner trembling, mingled with doubt, he had followed this long journey of the soul beyond the grave; its expiation in a burning region; the purification of its sidereal envelope, its meeting of the evil pilot, with face averted, seated in a barque, and of the good pilot, who looks one in the face; his appearance before the forty-two earthly judges; his justification by

[1] See the mural paintings in the temples of Thebes, reproduced in the book of François Lenormant, and the chapter on Egypt in *La Mission des Juifs* by M. Saint-Yves d'Alveydre.

Thoth, and finally his entry and transfiguration into the light of Osiris. We can judge of the power of this book and the total revolution which Egyptian initiation sometimes operated in the minds of men, by the following passage from the *Book of the Dead*: "This chapter was found at Hermopolis, in blue writing on an alabaster slab, at the feet of the god Thoth (Hermes) in the time of king Menkara, by Prince Hastetef, when travelling on an inspection of the temples. He carried the stone into the royal temple. Oh! mighty secret! He neither saw nor heard more, on reading this pure and holy chapter, no longer did he approach any woman, neither did he eat flesh or fish."[1] What truth was there in these disturbing accounts, in these hieratic images behind which sparkled the terrible mystery beyond the grave? Isis and Osiris know! they told him. But what were these gods who were only spoken of in mysterious whispers? It was to know this that the stranger knocked at the door of the mighty temple of Thebes or of Memphis.

Servants conducted him beneath the portico of an inner court, whose enormous pillars resembled gigantic lotus blooms as they upheld by their strength and purity the Solar Ark, the temple of Osiris. The hierophant drew near the new-comer.

[1] *Book of the Dead*, chap. lxiv.

His majestic features and tranquil countenance, the mystery of his dark, impenetrable eyes, glowing with an inner light, at once filled the candidate with awe. That look pierced like a needle, and the stranger felt himself in the presence of a man from whom it would be impossible to conceal anything. The priest of Osiris questioned the newcomer regarding his native town, his family, and the temple in which he had received his instruction. If, in the course of this brief but searching examination, he was judged to be unworthy of the Mysteries, he was shown to the door with a silent but irrevocable gesture. On the other hand, if the hierophant found in the aspirant a sincere yearning after truth, he requested him to follow. They crossed porticoes and inner courts, then they proceeded along a rock-hewn avenue opened to the sky and lined with many a stela and sphinx, until they reached a small temple leading to the subterranean crypts. Over the door was a life-size statue of Isis. The goddess was seated in an attitude of peace and meditation, and with a closed book on her knee. Her face was veiled, and at the foot of the statue could be read the words :

"My veil no mortal hand hath raised."

"This is the door of the occult sanctuary," said the hierophant. "Look at these two columns.

The red represents the spirit ascending towards the light of Osiris, the black signifies its captivity in matter, and the fall may go as far as utter annihilation. Whosoever enters upon our science and doctrine risks his life. The weak or the evil-doer find therein madness or death; the strong and pure alone find life and immortality. Many have foolishly entered by this door and have never come out alive, for it is an abyss from whose depths only the bold and fearless come back to the light. Reflect seriously on what you are going to do, on the dangers you are to run, and if your courage is not invincible, give up the enterprise, for once this door closes on you, it will be too late to draw back.'

If the stranger persisted in his determination, the hierophant took him into the outer court and gave him up to the servants of the temple, with whom he was to spend a week, engaged in the humblest of tasks, listening to hymns, and performing ablutions. The most rigorous silence was imposed on him.

When the trial evening had come, two attendants conducted the aspirant after the mysteries to the door of the occult sanctuary. They entered a dark vestibule, without any apparent exit. On either side of this gloomy-looking hall, the light of torches

enabled the stranger to see a row of statues with human bodies and heads of animals, lions, bulls, birds of prey, and serpents which seemed to mock at him as he passed. At the end of this sinister avenue which was crossed without a word being uttered, stood a mummy and a human skeleton, face to face. The two attendants pointed in silence to a hole in the wall in front of the novice. This led to a passage so low that it could only be entered on all fours.

"You are still permitted to retrace your steps," said one of the attendants. "The door of the sanctuary is not yet closed. If you do not wish this, you must proceed along this path, and there will be no return for you."

"I will go forward," said the novice, screwing up all his courage.

A small lighted lamp was given to him, and the attendants returned, noisily closing the sanctuary door. There could be no more hesitation; he had to enter the passage. Scarcely had he crawled forward a few feet than he heard a voice coming from the depths of the subterranean cavern, and saying: "Here perish all who foolishly covet knowledge and power." Owing to the wonderful acoustics of the spot, these words were repeated seven times by distanced echoes. He had to go

forward, for all that; the passage widened out, but the descent became ever more steep. Finally the bold traveller found himself in front of a shaft, terminating in a hole through which passed an iron ladder. This the novice descended. On reaching the last rung, his terrified glance plunged into a hideous-looking well. The poor naphtha lamp, which he convulsively clutched in his trembling hand, threw a vacillating light over the impenetrable darkness. What was he to do? Above him, return was impossible; below, a fall into the frightful blackness of night. In his distress, he perceived a small crevice on his left. Hanging on to the ladder with one hand, and extending his lamp with the other, he saw steps and a staircase. Safety at last! He was now free from the abyss, for he mounted the winding staircase which pierced the rock like an enormous gimlet. At last the candidate found himself in front of some bronze rails opening into an extensive gallery supported by immense caryatids. At intervals along the walls could be seen two rows of symbolical frescoes. There were eleven of these on each side, dimly lit by crystal lamps which the lovely caryatids held aloft in their hands.

The gate was opened to the novice by a magian, called a *pastophor* (shrine or casket bearer) who

kept guard over the sacred symbols. This latter welcomed him with a benevolent smile, congratulating him on having come successfully through the first test. Then he conducted him through the gallery, explaining the meanings of the sacred pictures, each of which was marked with a letter and a number. The twenty-two symbols represented the first twenty-two arcana and constituted the alphabet of occult science, *i.e.* the absolute principles and universal keys which, when applied by the will, become the source and origin of all wisdom and power. These principles were fixed in the memory by their correspondence with the letters of the sacred tongue and with the numbers attached to these letters. In this tongue each letter and number expresses a ternary law, having its repercussion in the *divine world*, the *intellectual world*, and the *physical world*. Just as a finger, when it touches the chord of a lyre makes one note of the scale resound and all its harmonics vibrate, in the same way the spirit, which contemplates all the virtualities of a number, the voice which utters a letter with the full consciousness of its meaning, summon forth a power which finds its repercussion in the three worlds.

Thus the letter A, which corresponds to the number 1, expresses *in the divine world*, the absolute

Being whence emanate all beings; *in the intellectual world,* unity, the source and synthesis of numbers; and *in the physical world,* man, the summit of relative beings, who, by the expansion of his faculties, raises himself into the concentric spheres of the infinite. The Egyptians represented the arcanum I by a white-robed Magian, with sceptre in hand and a golden crown on his head. The white robe signified purity; the sceptre, command; and the golden crown, universal light.

The novice was far from understanding all the strange and novel things he heard; unknown perspectives, however, opened out before him, at the words of the pastophor, in the presence of those fine paintings which looked down on him with the impassive gravity of the gods. Behind each of them, as in a flash, he caught glimpses of whole strings of thoughts and images suddenly evoked. For the first time, he suspected *the within* of the world, through the mysterious chain of causes. Thus, from letter to letter, and from number to number, the master explained to the pupil the meaning of the arcana and led him by *Isis Urania* to the *chariot of Osiris,* by the *thunder-struck tower* to the *flaming star,* and finally to *the crown of the Magi.* "Learn what this crown means," said the pastophor, "Every will which unites itself to God

to work justice and show forth truth, enters, this very life, into participation of the divine power over beings and things, the eternal recompense of freed spirits." The neophyte listened to the master speaking with mingled feelings of fear, surprise, and delight. These were the first lights of the sanctuary and this faint glimpse of truth seemed to him the dawn of a divine remembrance.

The tests, however, were not at an end. When he had finished speaking, the pastophor opened a door leading to another long and narrow vault, at the end of which he heard the crackling of a fiery furnace. "This is death!" exclaimed the novice, looking at his guide with a shudder of fright. "My son," replied the pastophor, "Death affrights none but abortive natures. Long ago, I crossed that flame as though it were a field of roses." As he spoke, the gate closed behind the candidate, who, on drawing near to the line of fire, saw that the furnace melted away into an optical illusion formed by twigs of resinous wood, interlaced and arranged in quincunx order. A footpath, traced through the midst of it, enabled him to pass rapidly to the far side. The *trial by fire* was followed by the *trial by water*. The candidate was forced to cross a lake of stagnant black water, by the light of burning naphtha behind him in the

chamber of fire. After this, two attendants conducted him, still trembling with dread, to an obscure grotto, where nothing could be seen beyond a soft couch, over which a bronze lamp, hanging from the vault, cast a mysterious, subdued light. Then they dried him and anointed his body with exquisite perfumes, after which he was clothed in fine linen and left alone, with the words: "Rest and await the hierophant."

The novice stretched out his tired limbs on the sumptuous covering of his bed. After all these varied emotions, a moment's calm seemed sweet to him. The sacred paintings he had seen, all these strange figures, sphinxes, and caryatids, came back to him in imagination. But why was one of these paintings like a haunting hallucination? He could not dispel the vision of the arcanum X, represented by a wheel suspended on its axle between two columns. On the one side rises Hermanubis, the genius of Good, beautiful as a youth on the threshold of manhood; on the other Typhon, the genius of Evil, plunges head foremost into the abyss. Between the two was seated a sphinx, on the summit of the wheel, holding a sword in her claw.

A vague murmur of lascivious music which seemed to issue from the depths of the grotto,

dispelled this image. These were light, indefinable sounds, sorrowful, languishing strains. His ear was caught by a metallic tinkle, mingled with the thrilling harmonies of a harp, the strains of a flute, and panting sighs like a burning breath. Wrapped in a dream of fire, the stranger closed his eyes. On opening them, he perceived close to his couch, an intoxicating vision of life and infernal seductiveness. A Nubian woman, clad in gauze of transparent purple, wearing a necklace of amulets and charms after the fashion of the priestesses of the mysteries of Mylitta, stood there gazing at him, holding in her left hand, a goblet crowned with roses. She was of that Nubian type whose intense and intoxicating sensuality concentrates all the powers of the feminine animal: projecting cheek-bones, dilated nostrils, and thick lips resembling luscious, red fruit. Her dark eyes flashed brightly through the dim light. The novice had leapt to his feet; in his surprise he instinctively crossed his hands over his breast, not knowing whether to tremble or rejoice. The slave, however, slowly drew near, and with downcast eyes murmured in low accents: "Art thou afraid of me, handsome stranger? I bring thee the victor's reward, oblivion of pain and sorrow, the goblet of happiness." . . . The novice hesitated; then the Nubian, apparently

overcome with fatigue, sank down on to the couch and wrapped the stranger in a beseeching, captivating glance, as with a long, moist flame. Woe be to him if he dares to accept the offer and brave her, bending over that mouth and drinking in the intoxication of the heavy perfumes which rise from those bronzed shoulders. Once he touches that hand, and sips from that goblet, he is lost . . . rolling over the couch, entwined in that burning embrace. Then, when his savage desire has been appeased, the liquid he has drunk plunges him into profound sleep. On awaking, he finds himself alone, tortured with anguish. The lamp casts a funereal light over his disordered couch. In front of him stands a man, the hierophant, who says to him :

" Thou hast shown thyself victor in the first tests. Thou hast triumphed over death, fire, and water, but thou hast not been able to conquer thyself. Thou, who aspirest after the lofty heights of knowledge and of the spirit, hast succumbed to the first temptation of the senses, thou hast fallen into the abyss of matter. The man who is enslaved to the senses, lives in darkness. Thou hast preferred darkness to light, remain therefore in darkness. I had warned thee of the dangers to which thou wert exposing thyself. Now thou hast saved

thy life, but lost thy liberty. Under penalty of death, thou shalt remain a slave of the temple."

If, on the other hand, the candidate had dashed the goblet to the ground and thrust aside the temptress, twelve attendants, armed with torches, surrounded him and led him away in triumph into the sanctuary of Isis, where a full assembly of magi, arranged in a semicircle, awaited him. At the other end of the temple, which was splendidly illuminated, he perceived the colossal statue of Isis in molten metal, a golden rose on her breast and crowned with a diadem of seven rays. In her arms she held her son Horus. There before the goddess, the hierophant, clad in purple, received the new-comer, who, under the most terrible of penalties, swore the oath of silence and submission. Thereupon, he greeted him, in the name of the whole assembly, as a brother and a future initiate. Before the august, calm-visaged masters, the disciple of Isis believed himself to be in the presence of the gods. Nobler and greater than ever before, he entered for the first time into the sphere of truth.

CHAPTER IV

OSIRIS. DEATH AND RESURRECTION

And yet he had reached only the threshold of truth, for now long years of study and apprenticeship were to begin. Before rising to the celestial Isis he must know the terrestrial Isis and become learned in physical and androgonic science. His time was spent in meditation within his cell, the study of hieroglyphs in the halls and courts of the immense temple, and the lessons of the masters. He learned the science of minerals and plants, the history of mankind and of nations, medicine, architecture, and sacred music. This long apprenticeship was to end not only *in knowing*, but *in becoming*. He was to gain strength by renunciation. The sages of the past believed that man came into possession of truth only on condition that it became a part of his inmost being, a spontaneous act of the soul. In this profound task of assimilation, however, the pupil was left to himself. His masters gave him no help; often did he wonder at their coldness and indifference. Attentive supervision

was kept over him, he was bound down to observe inflexible rules, absolute obedience was exacted of him, but no revelation was made to him beyond certain limits. The only reply he received to his uneasy questionings was: "Wait and work." Then followed sudden feelings of revolt and bitter regret, and frightful suspicions came to him. Had he become the slave of audacious impostors or of black magicians who, for some infamous purpose or other, were dominating his will? Truth had taken to flight and the very gods were forsaking him; he was alone, a prisoner in the temple. Truth had appeared to him in the form of a sphinx, which now said to him: "I am Doubt!" And the winged beast, with its impassive woman's head and lion's claws, carried him off to the burning sand of the desert, there to tear and rend him.

These nightmares were followed by hours of divine calm and foresight, during which he understood the symbolical meaning of the tests he had gone through on entering the temple. For, alas! the gloomy well into which he had almost fallen was not so black as the abyss of unfathomable truth; the fire he had passed through was less dreadful than the passions which still consumed his flesh; and the murky, ice-cold water into which

he had had to plunge was less cold than the doubt into which, in its evil hours, his spirit sank and was swamped.

In one of the halls of the temple, he saw arranged in two rows the sacred paintings which had been explained to him as representing the twenty-two arcana, on the night of the tests. These arcana, of which he was permitted to obtain a glimpse on the very threshold of occult science, were the columns of theology; though to understand them, he must pass through the whole initiation. None of the masters had since mentioned them again to him; he was permitted only to walk down the hall and meditate on these signs. Here he spent many a long, solitary hour. By means of these figures, chaste as light and grave as eternity, the truth that can neither be seen nor felt slowly filtered into the heart of the neophyte. In the mute company of these silent and nameless divinities, each one of whom seemed to preside over some sphere of life, he began to experience something new: at first, a descent to the very depths of his being, then a kind of detachment from the world which caused him to soar above terrestrial objects. At times he would ask one of the magi: "Shall I some day be permitted to scent the rose of Isis and see the light of Osiris?" The reply was: "That does

not depend on us. Truth is not given ; it is found in oneself or not found at all. We cannot make an adept of thee, thou must become one thyself. Long does the lotus press upwards beneath the surface of the stream, before spreading out its petals to the light. Hasten not the unfolding of the divine flower. If it is to come, it will come in its due season. Work and pray."

With feelings of mingled sadness and joy, the disciple returned to his studies and meditations. He experienced the austere though tender charm of that solitude through which passes, as it were, a breath of the being of beings. Thus months and years passed by. He felt a slow transformation, a complete metamorphosis taking place in himself. The passions which had beset his youth vanished like shadows, and the thoughts which now surrounded him smiled on him like immortal friends. What he felt from time to time was the engulfing of his terrestrial ego and the birth of a purer and more ethereal one. With such feelings he would fling himself down before the steps of the closed sanctuary. Then all desire and revolt, and even regret left him, and there was only an absolute yielding of his soul to the gods, a complete surrender to truth. " Oh, Isis ! " he said in his prayer, " since my soul is nothing else than a tear of thine

eyes, grant that it may fall like dew on other souls, and that, when I die, I may feel their perfume ascending to thee. I am now ready for the sacrifice."

After one of these silent prayers, the disciple, in a state of semi-ecstasy, saw the hierophant, enveloped in the warm light of the setting sun, standing by his side, like a vision that had issued from the ground. The master seemed to read every single thought of the disciple, to penetrate the entire drama of his inner life.

"My son," he said, "the hour draws nigh when truth shall be revealed to thee. Already hast thou divined it by descending into the depths of thy own nature, and finding divine life therein. Thou art about to enter into the mighty, ineffable communion of the initiates, for thou art worthy by thy purity of heart, thy love of truth and power of abnegation. No one, however, crosses the threshold of Osiris, without passing through death and resurrection. We will accompany thee into the crypt. Fear not, for thou art already one of our brethren."

At the twilight hour, the priests of Osiris, with torches in their hands, accompanied the new adept into a low crypt supported by four pillars which themselves rested on statues of

the sphinx. In one corner was an open marble sarcophagus.[1]

"No man," said the hierophant, "escapes death; every living soul is destined to resurrection. The adept passes living through the tomb, and enters in this life into the light of Osiris. Do thou therefore lie in this coffin and await the light. This night thou shalt cross the portals of Dread and attain to the threshold of Mastership."

The adept placed himself in the open sarcophagus, the hierophant stretched out his hand to bless him, and the procession of the initiates silently quitted the vault. A small lamp, placed on the ground, still casts a flickering light over the four statues of the sphinx which support the stout columns of the crypt. A low, muffled chorus of deep voices is now heard. Whence comes it? It is the funeral

[1] Archæologists have, long ago, seen in the sarcophagus of the Great Pyramid of Gizeh, the tomb of King Sesostris, if we may believe Herodotus, who was not an initiate, and to whom the Egyptian priests scarcely entrusted anything else than amusing popular tales. The kings of Egypt, however, had their tombs elsewhere. The strange inner structure of the pyramid proves that it must have been used in the initiation ceremonies and secret practices of the priests of Osiris. In it are found *the Well of Truth* we have described, the ascending staircase, the hall of the arcana. . . . The so-called *Chamber of the King*, which contains the sarcophagus, was the one into which the adept was led on the eve of his great initiation. The same arrangements were reproduced in the large temples of Central and Upper Egypt.

chant! . . . Now it dies away, the lamp flickers for the last time and dies out completely. The adept is alone in the darkness; the cold of the sepulchre, falling on him, casts a chill through every limb. He passes gradually through all the painful sensations of death, and falls into a lethargic condition. His life passes before him in successive scenes, like something unreal, and his earthly consciousness becomes ever more vague and diffuse. But in proportion as he feels his body melting away, the etheric, fluid part of his being is released and he enters into a state of ecstasy. . . .

What is that shining spot in the distance, scarcely perceptible through the black darkness? As he draws near, it increases in size and becomes a star, whose five rays have all the colours of the rainbow as it sends out into the blackness discharges of electric or magnetic light. Now it is a sun which attracts him by the whiteness of its incandescent centre. Is it the magic of the masters which has produced this vision; the invisible which now becomes visible? Or is it the portent of celestial truth, the blazing star of hope and immortality? It disappears; and in its place a bud opens its petals in the night, a flower that is not of matter, though sensitive and endowed with a soul. For it opens before him like a white rose; it spreads out

its petals and he sees a quiver come over its living leaves, and its blazing calyx grow redder than ever. Is it the flower of Isis, the mystic Rose of Wisdom which confines Love in its heart? Now it fades away like a cloud of perfumes. Then the ecstatic being feels a warm, caressing breath flow over it. After assuming strange forms, the cloud condenses and becomes a human figure, the form of a woman, the Isis of the occult sanctuary, though younger, smiling and luminous. A transparent veil twists in spirals around her and her body shines through it. In her hand she holds a papyrus scroll. Softly she draws near, leans over the initiate lying in his tomb and says to him: "I am thy invisible sister, thy divine soul, and this is the book of thy life. Some of the pages are filled with records of thy past existences, the blank pages are for thy future lives. Some day, I will unroll them all before thee. Thou knowest me now, call me and I will come!" While she speaks, a ray of tender love darts forth from her eyes. . . . Oh! Thou presence of my spiritual self, ineffable promise of the divine, marvellous blending into the impalpable beyond! . . .

And now everything breaks up, the vision is effaced. A frightful rending takes place, and the adept feels himself precipitated into his body as

into a corpse. He returns to the state of conscious lethargy ; iron bands seem to hold down his limbs ; a terrible weight crushes into his brain ; he awakes . . . and finds standing before him the hierophant, accompanied by the magi. They surround him, give him a cordial to drink, and he rises to his feet.

" Thou hast now returned to life," said the prophet. " Come and celebrate with us the love-feast of the initiates and tell us of thy voyage into the light of Osiris. For henceforth, thou art one of us."

Let us now transport ourselves along with the hierophant and the newly-appointed initiate on to the observatory of the temple, in the warm splendour of an Egyptian night. It was there that the chief of the temple gave the new adept the mighty revelation, relating to him *the vision of Hermes.* This vision was written on no papyrus, but marked in symbolical signs on the stelas of the secret crypt, known to the prophet alone. Its meaning was transmitted orally from pontiff to pontiff.

" Listen," said the hierophant, " this vision contains the eternal history of the world and the circle of things."

CHAPTER V

THE VISION OF HERMES [1]

ONE day, Hermes, after reflecting on the origin of things, fell asleep. A dull torpor took possession of his body; but in proportion as the latter grew benumbed, his spirit ascended into space. Then an immense being, of indeterminate form, seemed to call him by name.

"Who art thou?" said the terrified Hermes.

"I am Osiris, the sovereign Intelligence who is able to unveil all things. What desirest thou?"

"To behold the source of beings, O divine Osiris, and to know God."

"Thou shalt be satisfied."

Immediately Hermes felt himself plunged in a delicious light. In its pellucid billows passed the ravishing forms of all beings. Suddenly, a terrifying

[1] *The Vision of Hermes* is found at the beginning of the books of *Hermes Trismegistus*, under the name of *Poimandres*. The ancient Egyptian tradition has come down to us only in a slightly changed Alexandrian form. I have attempted to reconstitute this important fragment of Hermetic doctrine in the sense of the lofty initiation and esoteric synthesis it represents.

encircling darkness descended upon him. Hermes was in a humid chaos, filled with smoke and with a heavy, rumbling sound. Then a voice rose from the abyss, *the cry of light.* At once a quick-leaping flame darted forth from the humid depths, reaching to the ethereal heights. Hermes ascended with it, and found himself again in the expanse of space. Order began to clear up chaos in the abyss ; choruses of constellations spread above his head and *the voice of light* filled infinity.

" Dost thou understand what thou hast seen ? " said Osiris to Hermes, bound down in his dream and suspended between earth and sky.

" No," said Hermes.

" Thou wilt now learn. Thou hast just seen what exists from all eternity. The light thou didst first see is the divine intelligence which contains all things in potentiality, enclosing the models of all beings. The darkness in which thou wast afterwards plunged is the material world on which the men of earth live. But the fire thou didst behold shooting forth from the depths, is the divine Word. God is the Father, the Word is the son, and their union is Life."

" What marvellous sense has opened out to me ? " asked Hermes. " I no longer see with the eyes of the body, but with those of the spirit. How has that come to pass ? "

"Child of dust," replied Osiris, "it is because the Word is in thee. That in thee which hears, sees, and acts is the Word itself, the sacred fire, the creative utterance!"

"Since things are so," said Hermes, "grant that I may see the light of the worlds; the path of souls from which man comes and to which he returns."

"Be it done according to thy desire."

Hermes became heavier than a stone and fell through space like a meteorite. Finally he reached the summit of a mountain. It was night, the earth was gloomy and deserted, and his limbs seemed as heavy as iron.

"Raise thine eyes and look!" said the voice of Osiris.

Then Hermes saw a wonderful sight. The starry heavens, stretching through infinite space, enveloped him with seven luminous spheres. In one glance, Hermes saw the seven heavens stretching above his head, tier upon tier, like seven transparent and concentric globes, the sidereal centre of which he now occupied. The Milky Way formed the girdle of the last. In each sphere there rolled a planet accompanied by a Genius of different form, sign, and light. Whilst Hermes, dazzled by the sight, was contemplating their wide-spread efflorescence and majestic movements, the voice said to him:

"Look, listen, and understand. Thou seest the seven spheres of all life. Through them is accomplished the fall and ascent of souls. The seven Genii are the seven rays of the Word-Light. Each of them commands one sphere of the Spirit, one phase of the life of souls. The one nearest to thee is the Genius of the Moon, with his disquieting smile and crown of silver sickle. He presides over births and deaths, sets free souls from bodies and draws them into his ray. Above him, pale Mercury points out the path to ascending or descending souls with his caduceus, which contains all Knowledge. Higher still, shining Venus holds the mirror of Love, in which souls forget and recognise themselves in turn. Above her, the Genius of the Sun raises the triumphal torch of eternal Beauty. At a yet loftier height, Mars brandishes the sword of Justice. Enthroned on the azure sphere, Jupiter holds the sceptre of supreme power, which is divine Intelligence. At the boundaries of the world, beneath the signs of the Zodiac, Saturn bears the globe of universal wisdom."[1]

[1] It is unnecessary to state that these Gods bore other names in the Egyptian tongue. The seven cosmogonic Gods, however, correspond with one another in all mythologies, in meaning and attributes. They have their common root in the ancient esoteric tradition. As the western tradition has adopted the Latin names, we keep to them for greater clearness.

"I see," said Hermes, "the seven regions which comprise the visible and invisible world; I see the seven rays of the Word-Light, of the one God who traverses them and governs them by these rays. Still, O master, how does mankind journey through all these worlds?"

"Dost thou see," said Osiris, "a luminous seed fall from the regions of the Milky Way into the seventh sphere? These are germs of souls. They live like faint vapours in the region of Saturn, gay and free from care, knowing not their own happiness. On falling from sphere to sphere, however, they put on increasingly heavier envelopes. In each incarnation they acquire a new corporeal sense, in harmony with the surroundings in which they are living. Their vital energy increases, but in proportion as they enter into denser bodies they lose the memory of their celestial origin. Thus is effected the fall of souls which come from the divine Ether. Ever more and more captivated by matter and intoxicated by life, they fling themselves like a rain of fire, with quiverings of voluptuous delight, through the regions of Grief, Love, and Death, right into their earthly prison where thou thyself lamentest, held down by the fiery centre of the earth, and where divine life appears to thee nothing more than an empty dream."

"Can souls die?" asked Hermes.

"Yes," replied the voice of Osiris, "many perish in the fatal descent. The soul is the daughter of heaven, and its journey is a test. If it loses the memory of its origin, in its unbridled love of matter, the divine spark which was in it and which might have become more brilliant than a star, returns to the ethereal region, a lifeless atom, and the soul disaggregates in the vortex of gross elements."

Hermes shuddered at these words, for a raging tempest enveloped him in a black mist. The seven spheres disappeared beneath dense vapours. In them he saw human spectres, uttering strange cries, carried off and torn by phantoms of monsters and animals, amidst nameless groans and blasphemies.

"Such is the destiny," said Osiris, "of souls irremediably base and evil. Their torture finishes only with their destruction, which includes the loss of all consciousness. The vapours are now dispersing, the seven spheres reappear beneath the firmament. Look on this side. Do you see this swarm of souls trying to mount once more to the lunar regions? Some are beaten back to earth like eddies of birds beneath the might of the tempest. The rest with mighty wings reach the upper sphere, which draws them with it as it rotates. Once they have come to this sphere, they recover their vision

of divine things. This time, however, they are not content to reflect them in the dream of a powerless happiness ; they become impregnated thereby with the lucidity of a grief-enlightened consciousness, the energy of a will acquired through struggle and strife. They become luminous, for they possess the divine in themselves and radiate it in their acts. Strengthen therefore thy soul, O Hermes ! calm thy darkened mind by contemplating these distant flights of souls which mount the seven spheres and are scattered about therein like sheaves of sparks. Thou also canst follow them, but a strong will it needs to rise. Look how they swarm and form into divine choruses. Each places itself beneath its favourite Genius. The most beautiful dwell in the solar region ; the most powerful rise to Saturn. Some ascend to the Father, powers themselves amidst the powers. For where everything ends, everything eternally begins ; and the seven spheres say together : ' Wisdom ! Love ! Justice ! Beauty ! Splendour ! Knowledge ! Immortality ! ' "

" This," said the hierophant, " is what ancient Hermes saw and what his successors have handed down to us. The words of the wise are like the seven notes of the lyre which contain all music, along with the numbers and the laws of the universe. The vision of Hermes resembles the starry heaven,

whose unfathomable depths are strewn with constellations. For the child this is nothing more than a gold-studded vault, for the sage it is boundless space in which worlds revolve, with their wonderful rhythms and cadences. This vision contains the eternal numbers, evoking signs and magic keys. The more thou learnest to contemplate and understand it, the farther thou shalt see its limits extend, for the same organic law governs all worlds."

The prophet of the temple commented on the sacred text. He explained that the doctrine of the Word-Light represents divinity *in the static condition*, in its perfect balance. He showed its triple nature, which is at once intelligence, force, and matter; spirit, soul, and body; light, word, and life. Essence, manifestation, and substance are three terms which take each other for granted. Their union constitutes the divine and intellectual principle *par excellence*, the law of the ternary unity which governs creation from above downwards.

Having thus led his disciple to the ideal centre of the universe, the generating principle of Being, the master spread him abroad in time and space in a multiple efflorescence. For the second part of the vision represents divinity *in the dynamic condition*, *i.e.* in active evolution; in other terms, the visible and invisible universe, the living heavens.

The seven spheres attached to the seven planets symbolise seven principles, seven different states of matter and spirit, seven different worlds which each man and each humanity are forced to pass through in their evolution across a solar system. The seven Genii or the seven cosmogonic Gods signify the superior, directing spirits of all spheres, the offspring themselves of inevitable evolution. To an initiate of old, therefore, each great God was the symbol and patron of legions of spirits which reproduced his type in a thousand varieties, and which, from their own sphere, could exercise their action over mankind and terrestrial things. The seven Genii of the vision of Hermes are the seven Devas of India, the seven Amshapands of Persia, the seven great Angels of Chaldæa, the seven Sephiroths [1] of the Kabbala, the seven Archangels of the Christian Apocalypse. The great septenary which enfolds the universe does not vibrate in the seven colours of the rainbow and the seven notes of the scale, only; it also manifests itself in the constitution of man, which is triple in essence, but sevenfold in its evolution.[2]

[1] There are ten Sephiroths in the Kabbala. The first three represent the divine ternary, the seven others the evolution of the universe.

[2] We will here give the Egyptian terms of this septenary constitution of man, found in the Kabbala: *Chat*, material body; *Anch*, vital force; *Kan*, etheric double or astral body; *Hati*,

" Thus," said the hierophant in conclusion, " thou hast reached the very threshold of the great arcanum. The divine life has appeared to thee beneath the phantoms of reality. Hermes has unfolded to thee the invisible heavens, the light of Osiris, the hidden God of the universe who breathes in millions of souls and animates thereby the wandering globes and working bodies. It is now thine to direct thy path and choose the road leading to the pure Spirit. Henceforth dost thou belong *to those who have been brought back from death to life.* Remember that there are two main keys to knowledge. This is the first : " The without is like the within of things ; the small is like the large ; there is only one law and he who works is One. In the divine economy, there is nothing either great or small." And this is the second : " Men are mortal gods and gods are immortal men." Happy the man who understands these words, for he holds the key to all things. Remember that the law of mystery veils the great truth. Total knowledge can be revealed only to our brethren who have gone

animal soul ; *Bai*, rational soul ; *Cheybi*, spiritual soul ; *Kou*, divine spirit ; correspond to the δαίμονες, ἥρωές or ψυχαι ἄχραντοι of the Greeks.

The development of these fundamental ideas of the esoteric teaching will be found in the book of *Orpheus*, and more especially in that of *Pythagoras*.

through the same trials as ourselves. Truth must be measured according to intelligence ; it must be veiled from the feeble, whom it would madden, and concealed from the wicked, who are capable of seizing only its fragments, which they would turn into weapons of destruction. Keep it in thy heart and let it speak through thy work. Knowledge will be thy might, faith thy sword, and silence thy armour that cannot be broken."

The revelations of the prophet of Ammon-Rā, which opened out to the new initiate such vast horizons over himself and over the universe, doubtless produced a profound impression, when uttered from the observatory of a Theban temple, in the clear calm of an Egyptian night. The pylons, the white roofs and terraces of the temples lay asleep at his feet between the dark clusters of nopals and tamarind trees. Away in the distance were large monolithic shrines, colossal statues of the gods, seated like incorruptible judges on their silent lake. Three pyramids, geometrical figures of the tetragram and of the sacred septenary, could be dimly seen on the horizon, their triangles clearly outlined in the light grey air. The unfathomable firmament was studded with stars. With what a strange gaze he looked at those constellations which were depicted to him as future dwellings ! When finally the gold-

tipped barque of the moon rose above the dark mirror of the Nile which died away on the horizon, like a long bluish serpent, the neophyte believed he saw the barque of Isis floating over the river of souls which it carries off towards the sun of Osiris. He remembered *the Book of the Dead*, and the meaning of all the symbols was now unveiled to his mind after what he had seen and learned; he might believe himself to be in the crepuscular kingdom of the Amenti, the mysterious interregnum between the earthly and the heavenly life, where the departed, who are at first without eyes and power of utterance, by degrees regain sight and voice. He too was about to undertake the great journey, the journey of the infinite, through worlds and existences. Hermes had already absolved him and judged him to be worthy. He had given him the explanation of the great enigma: "One only soul, the great soul of the All, by dividing itself out, has given birth to all the souls that struggle throughout the universe." Armed with the mighty secret, he entered the barque of Isis. Rising aloft into the ether, it floated in the interstellar regions. The broad rays of a far-spreading dawn were already piercing the azure veils of the celestial horizons, and the choir of the glorious spirits, the Akhimou-Sekou, who have attained to eternal

repose, was chanting: "Rise, Rā Hermakouti, Sun of spirits! Those in thy barque are in exaltation. They raise exclamations in *the barque of millions of years*. The great divine cycle overflows with joy when glorifying the mighty sacred barque. Rejoicing is taking place in the mysterious chapel. Rise, Ammon-Rā Hermakouti, thou self-creating Sun!" And the initiate replied proudly: "I have attained the country of truth and justification. I rise from the dead as a living God, and shine forth in the choir of the Gods who dwell in heaven, for I belong to their race."

Such audacious thoughts and hopes might haunt the spirit of the adept during the night following the mystic ceremony of resurrection. The following morning, in the avenues of the temple, beneath the blinding light, that night seemed to him no more than a dream . . . though how impossible to forget . . . that first voyage into the intangible and invisible! Once again he read the inscription on the statue of Isis: "My veil no mortal hand hath raised." All the same a corner of the veil was raised, but only to fall back again, and he woke up on the earth of tombs. Ah, how far he was from the goal he had dreamed of! For the voyage on *the barque of millions of years* is a long one! But at least he had caught a faint glimpse of his

final destination. Even though his vision of the other world were only a dream, a childish outline of his imagination, still obscured by the mists of earth, could he doubt that other consciousness he had felt being born in him, that mysterious *double*, that celestial ego which had appeared to him in its astral beauty like a living form and spoken to him in his sleep? Was this a sister-soul, was it his Genius, or only a reflection of his inmost spirit, a vision of his future being dimly foreshadowed? A wonder and a mystery! Surely it was a reality, and if that soul was only his own, it was the true one. What would he not do to recover it? Were he to live millions of years he would never forget that divine hour in which he had seen his other self, so pure and radiant.[1]

The initiation was at an end, and the adept consecrated as priest of Osiris. If he was an Egyptian, he remained attached to the temple; if a foreigner, he was permitted, from time to time, to return to his own country, therein to establish the worship of Isis or to accomplish a mission.

[1] In the Egyptian teachings, man was considered in this life to have consciousness only of the animal and the rational soul, called *hati* and *baï*. The higher part of his being, the spiritual soul and the divine being, *cheybi* and *kou*, exist in him as unconscious germs and develop after this life, when he becomes himself *an Osiris*.

Before leaving, however, he swore a formidable oath that he would maintain absolute silence regarding the secrets of the temple. Never would he betray to a single person what he had seen or heard, never would he reveal the doctrine of Osiris except under the triple veil of the mythological symbols or of the mysteries. Were he to violate this oath, sudden death would come to him, sooner or later, however far away he might be. Silence, however, had become the buckler of his might.

On returning to the shores of Ionia, to the turbulent town in which he formerly lived, amidst that multitude of men, a prey to mad passions, who exist like fools in their ignorance of themselves, his thoughts often flew back to Egypt and the pyramids, to the temple of Ammon-Rā. Then the dream of the crypt came back to memory. And just as the lotus, in that distant land, spreads out its petals on the waves of the Nile, so this white vision floated above the slimy, turbulent stream of this life. At chosen hours, he would hear *its* voice, and it was the voice of light. Arousing throughout his being the strains of an inner music, it said to him: "The soul is a veiled light. When neglected, it flickers and dies out, but when it is fed with the holy oil of love, it shines forth like an immortal lamp."

MOSES

(THE MISSION OF ISRAEL)

There was nothing concealed from him, and he covered over with a veil the essence of all he had seen.

(*Words inscribed beneath the statue of Phtahmer, high priest of Memphis*—the Louvre Museum.)

The most difficult and obscure of sacred books, *Genesis*, contains as many secrets as words, and every word conceals several.

Saint Jerome.

Child of the past and big with the future, this book (the first ten chapters of *Genesis*), heir of the whole science of the Egyptians, yet contains the germs of future sciences. All that is most profound and mysterious in Nature, all the wonders the spirit can conceive of, and whatever in intelligence is most sublime, that it possesses.

FABRE D'OLIVET, *La langue hébraïque restituée* (*Discours préliminaire*).

MOSES

CHAPTER I

THE MONOTHEISTIC TRADITION AND THE PATRIARCHS OF THE WILDERNESS

REVELATION is as old as conscious humanity. The offspring of inspiration, it dates back into the night of time. One only needs to look carefully into the sacred books of Iran, India, and Egypt to see that the original ideas of esoteric teaching constitute its hidden, though deep-rooted, basis. In them may be found the invisible soul, the generating principle of these great religions. All powerful initiators have, at some time of their life, caught a glimpse of the radiance of the inner truth ; but the light from it has been broken up and coloured according to their genius and mission, time and place. With Rama we have passed through the Aryan initiation, with Krishna the Brahmanic, and that of Isis and Osiris with the priests of Thebes. After this shall we deny that the immaterial principle of the supreme God,

which constitutes the essential dogma of monotheism and the unity of Nature, was unknown to the Brahmans and the priests of Amen-Rā? Doubtless they did not bring the world into existence by an instantaneous act, at the caprice of divinity, as do our elementary theologians; but wisely and gradually, along the pathway of emanation and evolution, they drew the visible out of the invisible, the universe out of the unfathomable depths of God. The male and female duality came from the primitive unity, the living trinity of man and the universe from the creative duality, and so on. The sacred numbers constituted the eternal word, the rhythm and instrument of divinity. Contemplated with a greater or less degree of lucidity and power, they call up in the mind of the initiate the internal structure of the world, through his own; just as a correct note produced by a bow from a glass covered with sand sketches out in miniature the harmonious forms of the vibrations which fill with their sound-waves the vast kingdom of the air.

But the esoteric monotheism of Egypt never left the sanctuaries. Its sacred science remained the privilege of a small minority. The enemies from without began to batter in and breach this ancient bulwark of civilisation. At the period

we have now reached, the twelfth century before Christ, Asia was plunging more and more into the cult of matter. India was already marching fast to a condition of decadence. A powerful empire had arisen on the banks of the Euphrates and the Ganges. Babylon, that monstrous and colossal city, filled with wonder and amaze the nomadic nations all around. The kings of Assyria proclaimed themselves monarchs of the four regions of the world; it was their ambition to have the boundaries of the world as the only limits of their empire. They trampled on nations, carried them off in multitudes, enlisted them into service, and let them loose upon one another. Neither human respect, the right of nations, nor religious principle, but an unbridled persona ambition, such was the law of the successors of Ninus and Semiramis. Profound was the science of the Chaldæan priests, though far less pure, lofty, and effective than that of the Egyptian priests. In Egypt science held supreme sway. The priesthood there always exercised sovereign power over royalty. The Pharaohs remained its pupils, never becoming hateful despots like the kings of Babylon. In Babylon, on the other hand, the priesthood was trampled under foot, being nothing but an instrument in the hands of the tyrants from

the very beginning. In a bas-relief of Nineveh may be seen Nimrod—a sturdy giant, strangling in his powerful arms a young lion which he holds clasped to his breast. A speaking symbol, for thus did the monarchs of Assyria strangle the Iranian lion, the heroic people of Zoroaster, murdering his pontiffs and magi, and levying heavy contributions on his kings. If the *rishis* of India and the priests of Egypt in their wisdom allowed Providence in some degree to reign over the land, one might in the same way say that the reign of Babylon was that of Destiny, *i.e.* of blind, brute force. Babylon thus became the tyrannical centre of universal anarchy; the steady, fixed eye of the social storm which was enveloping Asia in its vortex; the redoubtable eye of Destiny ever open, keeping watch over the nations to destroy them.

What could Egypt do against the invading torrent? Even now had the Hyksos almost been carried away by it. Valiantly did she resist, but she could not hold out for ever. Another six centuries and the Persian cyclone, following on the Babylonian, was on the point of sweeping away her temples and her Pharaohs. Though Egypt possessed the genius of initiation and preservation to the highest degree, she never had

that of expansion and propagandism. Were the accumulated treasures of her science now to be lost? Certainly the greater part of them were buried, and when the Alexandrians came they could unearth nothing but fragments. Nevertheless, two nations of opposite genius lit their torches at her sanctuaries, torches with differing beams. One of them illumines the furthermost stretches of the heavens, whilst the other lights up and transfigures the earth: Israel and Greece.

The importance of the people of Israel in the history of mankind is immediately apparent, for two reasons. The first is that this people represented monotheism; the second, that it gave birth to Christianity. The providential object of the mission of Israel, however, appears only to him who, opening the symbols of the Old and the New Testament, perceives that they contain the whole esoteric tradition of the past, though in a form often impaired—especially so far as the Old Testament is concerned—by the numerous editors and translators, most of whom were ignorant of the original meaning. The part played by Israel becomes evident, for this people forms the necessary link between the old and the new cycle—between East and West. The consequence of the monotheistic idea is the unification of mankind

under one God and one law. So long, however, as theologians form a childish idea of God and men of science either ignore or purely and simply deny Him, the moral, social, and religious unity of our planet will be nothing more than a pious desire or a postulate of religion and science, which are incapable of realising this unity. On the other hand, it appears possible when there is esoterically and scientifically recognised in the divine principle, the key to the world and to life, to man and to society in their evolution. Finally Christianity, *i.e.* the religion of Christ, itself only appears in its true loftiness and universality when it unveils its esoteric treasures. Then only does it show itself as the resultant of all that has preceded it, as containing in itself the origin and end of, as well as the methods for effecting, the total regeneration of mankind. Only by opening up to us its final mysteries will it become what it is in reality: the religion of promise and performance, *i.e.* of a world-wide initiation.

Moses, an Egyptian initiate and priest of Osiris, was beyond all doubt the organiser of monotheism. Through him this principle, hitherto concealed beneath the triple veil of the mysteries, issued from the recesses of the temple and entered into the domain of history. Moses was bold

enough to turn the loftiest principle of initiation into the sole dogma of a national religion, and yet so prudent that he revealed its consequences to none but a small number of initiates, imposing it on the masses by fear. In this the prophet of Sinai had evidently far-sighted views which looked beyond the destinies of his own people. The universal religion of mankind was the true mission of Israel, a mission few Jews, except their greatest Prophets, have understood. The accomplishment of this mission took for granted the absorption of the nation representing it. The Jewish people is scattered and destroyed, but the idea of Moses and of the Prophets has survived and grown. Developed and transfigured by Christianity, adopted by Islam, though on a lower mode, it had to impose itself on the barbarous West and react on Asia itself. Henceforth, however humanity may revolt and be harassed by internal strife, it will revolve round this central idea, like the nebula round the sun which organises it. Such was the formidable task assumed by Moses.

For this undertaking, the most colossal one there had ever been since the prehistoric exodus of the Aryans, Moses found an instrument ready at hand in the tribes of the Hebrews, especially in

those which were settled in Egypt in the valley of Goshen, living there in slavery under the name of Beni-Jacob. For the establishment of a monotheistic religion he had also had forerunners in those peaceful nomadic kings mentioned in the Bible: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Let us glance for a moment at these Hebrews and patriarchs. Afterwards we will give an outline of their great Prophet, with the desert mirages and the gloomy nights of Sinai as a background; the thunder of the legendary Jehovah making itself heard on every side.

These Ibrim, indefatigable nomads and eternal exiles, had been known for centuries, for thousands of years.[1] Brothers of the Arabs, the Hebrews, like all Semites, were the offspring of an ancient mixture of the white and black races. They had been seen passing to and fro in the north of Africa under the name of Bodones (Bedouins); without either shelter or bed, they would pitch their movable tents in the mighty deserts between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, the Euphrates and Palestine. These travellers, whether Ammonites, Elamites, or Edomites, all resembled one another. The ass or

[1] *Ibrim* means "those of the other side, those from beyond, who have crossed the stream." Renan, *Histoire du peuple d'Israël.*

camel served them as vehicles, their tent as a house, whilst their sole property consisted of cattle wandering to and fro like themselves, ever browsing on the land of others. Like their ancestors, the Ghiborim, like the early Celts, these untamed tribes hated carved stones, fortified towns, stone temples, and drudgery. All the same, the monster cities of Babylon and Nineveh, with their gigantic palaces, their debauchery and mystery, exercised an invincible fascination over the semi-savages. Beguiled into these stone prisons, captured by the soldiers of the kings of Assyria and enlisted into their armies, they would at times plunge into all the orgies of Babylon. Then again the Israelites allowed themselves to be led astray by the women of Moab, who boldly seduced them with their ebony skins and flashing eyes. They led them away to worship idols of stone and wood, and even to offer sacrifice to cruel Moloch. Then suddenly they would make their escape, the desire for the wilderness again upon them.

On returning to the bleak lowlands, where nothing is to be heard but the roaring of wild beasts, to the wide-stretching desert sands, where the stars were their only guides, cowering before the cold light of those heavenly bodies which their

ancestors had worshipped, feelings of shame came upon them. If a patriarch, an inspired Prophet, then spoke to them of the One God, of Elohim, of Sabaoth, the God of Hosts who sees everything and punishes the guilty, these grown-up children, wild and bloodthirsty, bowed their heads, knelt down in prayer, and allowed themselves to be led away like sheep.

By degrees this idea of the great Elohim, the one, all-powerful god, filled their soul, just as in Padan-Aram in the twilight the unevenness of the ground fades away beneath the endless line of the horizon, colours and distances are drowned beneath the glorious expanse of heaven, and the universe changed into one single mass of darkness, surmounted by a scintillating sphere of stars.

Who were the patriarchs? Abram, Abraham, or father Orham was a king of Ur, a town of Chaldæa, near Babylon. In Assyrian tradition he is represented as seated in an armchair, benevolent in aspect.[1] This ancient personage, who has passed into the mythological history of all peoples, for Ovid quotes him,[2] is the very same the Bible represents to us as emigrating

[1] Renan, *Peuple d'Israël.*

[2] *Rexit Achaemenias pater Orchamus, isque*
Septimus a prisco numeratur origine Belo.
—*Metam.* 4, 212.

from the land of Ur into the land of Canaan at the voice of the Eternal: "The Eternal said unto him: I am the Almighty God; walk before me and be thou perfect. . . . I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee" (Gen. xvii. 1, 7). This passage, translated into the language of the present day, signifies that a very ancient Semite chief, named Abraham, who had probably received the Chaldæan initiation, felt impelled by the voice within to conduct his tribe towards the West, and that he imposed on it the worship of Elohim.

The name Isaac, in its prefix Is, seems to point to an Egyptian initiation, whilst those of Jacob and Joseph might indicate a Phœnician origin. At all events the three patriarchs were probably three chiefs of different tribes, who lived at distant periods from one another. Long after Moses, the Israelite legend grouped them into a single family. Isaac became the son of Abraham, Jacob the son of Isaac. This way of representing the intellectual by the physical paternity was greatly in vogue in ancient priesthoods. From this legendary genealogy there arises one important fact: the filiation of the monotheistic cult through the patriarch

initiates of the desert. That these men may have had inner warnings, spiritual revelations under the form of dreams or even of visions in waking consciousness, is in no way opposed to esoteric science or to the universal psychic law which governs souls and worlds. These facts, in the Bible narrative, have assumed the naïve form of the visits of angels, who have been entertained for a time beneath the tents.

Had these patriarchs profound insight into the spirituality of God and the religious ends of humanity? Doubtless they had. Though inferior in positive science to the magi of Chaldæa and the Egyptian priests, they probably surpassed them in moral elevation and in that breadth of soul induced by a wandering, free life. The sublime order which Elohim causes to reign throughout the universe, they express in social life, in family worship, respect for their wives, passionate love for their sons, protection for the whole of the tribe, and hospitality towards strangers. In a word, they are the natural arbiters between families and tribes. Their patriarchal staff is a sceptre of righteousness. They exercise a civilising authority and breathe the very spirit of gentleness and peace. Here and there the esoteric thought may be seen to

pierce through the patriarchal legend. At Bethel, for instance, Jacob in a dream sees a ladder with Elohim at the top and angels ascending and descending. Here may be recognised a popular Judaic abridged form of the vision of Hermes and of the doctrine of the ascending and descending evolution of souls.

A historical fact of the utmost importance regarding the epoch at which the patriarchs lived finally appears in two illuminating verses. A meeting took place between Abraham and a brother initiate. After making war on the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham goes to pay homage to Melchisedek. This king was living in the stronghold which is to be Jerusalem at a later date. "Melchisedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine; for he was the priest of Elohim, the most high God. And he blessed Abram, saying: Blessed be Abram by Elohim, the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth" (Gen. xiv. 18, 19). Here, accordingly, we have a king who is high priest of the same God as Abraham's. The latter regards him as a superior, a master, and receives the communion from him under the elements of bread and wine, in the name of Elohim; in ancient Egypt a sign of communion amongst initiates.

Accordingly, there existed a bond of fraternity, signs of recognition, and a common aim amongst all the worshippers of Elohim, from the centre of Chaldæa right into Palestine and perhaps into some of the sanctuaries of Egypt.

This monotheistic conspiracy was only waiting for an organiser. And so, between the winged Bull of Assyria and the Sphinx of Egypt, which from afar look over the wilderness; between a crushing tyranny and the impenetrable mystery of initiation, the elect tribes of the Abramites, the Jacobelites, and the Beni-Israel advance. They flee from the shameless festivals of Babylon, they turn aside as they pass before the orgies of Moab, the horrors of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the monstrous worship of Baal. Under the protection of the patriarchs the caravan follows its oasis-marked route, dotted with springs here and there and slender palm-trees. Like a long string it dies away in the immensity of the desert beneath the burning rays of the sun and the purple mantle of the twilight. Neither cattle nor women nor old men know the object of this eternal journey; they advance at the doleful, resigned pace of the camels. Where are they going on this never-ending march? The patriarchs will know; for Moses is to tell them.

CHAPTER II

INITIATION OF MOSES IN EGYPT—HIS FLIGHT TO JETHRO

RAMESES II. was one of the great monarchs of Egypt. His son was named Menephtah. According to Egyptian custom, he received his education from the priests in the temple of Amen-Rā at Memphis, the royal art being at that time considered a branch of the sacerdotal. Menephtah was a timid young man, inquisitive, and of ordinary intelligence. He had a love—by no means enlightened—for occult science, which later on made him the victim of inferior magicians and astrologers. His companion in study was a young man of a retiring, strange, and harsh nature.

Osarsiph[1] was Menephtah's cousin, the son of the princess royal, sister of Rameses II. Whether he was an adopted or a natural son has never been known. Osarsiph was, above all else, the child of the temple between whose columns he

[1] The first Egyptian name of Moses (Manethon, quoted by Philo).

had grown up. Dedicated to Isis and Osiris by his mother, from his early youth he had been a Levite at the coronation of the Pharaoh, in the priestly processions of the great festivals, and carried the ephod, the chalice or the censers; afterwards he was seen inside the Temple, solemn and attentive, listening to the sacred music, the hymns, and the teachings of the priests.

Osarsiph was short of stature; he had a quiet, thoughtful air and a forehead like a ram's, with piercing black eyes, fixed and keen as an eagle's. He had been called "the silent," so concentrated was he, scarcely ever uttering a word. Often did he falter when he spoke, as though seeking for words or afraid to utter his thoughts. Though apparently timid, suddenly, like a thunder-clap, a terrible idea would burst out in a single word, leaving behind a flash of light. Then it was seen that if ever "the silent one" began to act he would be astonishingly bold. Already the furrowed brow betokened one predestined to some heavy task; about his eyes there seemed to hover a threatening cloud.[1]

[1] The Biblical account (Exodus ii. 1–10) makes of Moses a Jew of the tribe of Levi, found by Pharaoh's daughter among the reeds of the Nile, placed there by the mother's cunning to touch the heart of the princess, and save the child from a persecution similar to that of Herod. On the other hand, Manethon, the Egyptian priest,

Women feared the eye of this young Levite, unfathomable as the tomb, whilst his countenance was as impassive as the door of the temple of Isis. One would have said they had a presentiment that an enemy of the gentle sex was present in this future representative of the male principle in religion in its most absolute and intractable elements.

His mother, however, the princess royal, ardently hoped that her son might some day sit on the throne of the Pharaohs. Osarsiph was more intelligent than Menephtah ; with the help of the priesthood, he might hope to usurp the kingdom. True, the Pharaohs appointed their successors from amongst their sons. Still the priests at times in the interests of the State would refuse to ratify

to whom we are indebted for the most authentic information regarding the dynasties of the Pharaohs, information now confirmed by the inscriptions on the monuments, affirms that Moses was a priest of Osiris. Strabo, who obtained his information from the same source, *i.e.* from the Egyptian priests, also bears witness to this fact. Here the Egyptian origin has more value than the Jewish, for the priests of Egypt had not the slightest interest in making Greeks or Romans believe that Moses belonged to their race, whilst the national *amour-propre* of the Jews compelled them to regard the founder of their nation as a man of the same blood with themselves. The Biblical narrative also recognises that Moses was brought up in Egypt and sent by his government as inspector of the Jews of Goshen. This is the important fact establishing the secret filiation between the Mosaic religion and Egyptian initiation. Clement of Alexandria believed that Moses was a profound initiate of the science of Egypt ; indeed, the work of the creator of Israel would otherwise be incomprehensible.

the decree of the prince once he was dead. Often had they removed unworthy or feeble successors from the throne to give the sceptre to a royal initiate. Menephtah was already jealous of his cousin ; Rameses kept an eye upon him, for he distrusted the silent Levite.

One day Osarsiph's mother met her son in the Serapeum of Memphis, an immense place filled with obelisks, mausoleums, small and large temples, a kind of open-air museum of national glories approached along an avenue flanked by six hundred sphinxes. In the presence of his royal mother the Levite bowed to the ground, and, according to custom, waited for her to speak to him.

"Thou art about to enter into the mysteries of Isis and Osiris," she said to him. "For a long period I shall not see thee, my son. Do not forget, however, that thou art of the blood of the Pharaohs, and that I am thy mother. Look all around thee. . . . some day, if thou wilt . . . all this shall belong to thee!"

With a wave of her hand she pointed to the obelisks and temples, then to Memphis, and the wide-stretching horizon.

A disdainful smile passed over the countenance of Osarsiph, habitually as smooth and motionless as a bronze figure.

"Dost thou then wish me," he said, "to rule over this people which worships gods with heads of jackal, ibis and hyena? What will remain of all these idols after a few centuries?"

Osarsiph bent down, picked up a handful of fine sand, which he watched as it escaped through his slender fingers, before the eyes of his astonished mother: "No more than that," he added.

"Dost thou then despise the religion of our fathers and the science of our priests?"

"No, no; on the contrary, that is what I aspire to! But the pyramid is motionless; it must be made to move. I shall not be a Pharaoh; my home is far from here . . . away there . . . in the wilderness!"

"Osarsiph!" said the princess in tones of reproach, "wherefore dost thou blaspheme? It was a fiery wind which brought thee into my womb, and now I see clearly it is the tempest which is to carry thee away! Though I gave thee birth, I do not know thee! In the name of Osiris, who art thou, and what wilt thou do?"

"Do I even know myself? Osiris alone knows, perhaps he will reveal it to me. Give me thy blessing, my mother, that Isis may protect me and the land of Egypt be favourable to me."

Osarsiph knelt before his mother, respectfully crossed his hands over his breast, and bowed his head. Removing from her brow the lotus flower she wore there, as was the wont of the temple women, she gave it him to breathe in its perfume ; then, seeing that her son's thoughts would remain an eternal mystery to her, she stole away, murmuring a prayer.

Osarsiph passed triumphantly through the initiation of Isis. His unbending soul and iron will made light of the tests. Of a mathematical and all-comprehending mind, he showed a giant's intellect and understood the sacred numbers, the fertile symbolism and application of which were then almost endless. His mind, disdainful alike of things which exist only in appearance and of passing individuals, delighted only in immutable principles. From these heights he quietly and surely penetrated and dominated all, without manifesting either desire, revolt, or inquisitiveness.

Osarsiph had remained an enigma to his masters as well as to his mother. He was rigid and inflexible as an eternal principle : this was what terrified them most. They felt they could neither bend nor turn him aside from the path. He proceeded along his unknown way like a heavenly body in its invisible orbit. Membra,

the pontiff, wondered to what heights this self-concentrated ambition of his would rise. He determined to find out. One day Osarsiph, along with three other priests of Osiris, had been bearing the golden ark, which went before the pontiff on the occasion of important ceremonies. This ark contained the ten most secret books of the temple, dealing with magic and theurgy.

On returning to the sanctuary with Osarsiph, Membra said to him :—

"Thou art of royal lineage ; thy might and science are beyond thy years. What desirest thou ?"

"Nothing but this." As he spoke, Osarsiph laid his hand on the sacred ark, which the golden hawks were protecting with their shining wings.

"Then thou desirest to become pontiff of Amen-Rā and a prophet of Egypt ?"

"No, my desire is to know what there is in these books."

"How wilt thou obtain this knowledge, since no one but the pontiff is permitted to acquire it ?"

"Osiris speaks as he will, when he will, to whomsoever he will. What this ark contains is nothing but the dead letter. If the living Spirit wishes to speak to me, he will speak."

"And what dost thou intend to do to obtain this?"

"Wait and obey."

When these replies were related to Rameses II., they increased his mistrust. He dreaded lest Osarsiph should aspire to the rank of Pharaoh, to the prejudice of his own son, Menephtah. Consequently Pharaoh commanded that his sister's son should be appointed sacred scribe of the temple of Osiris. This important function included the language of symbols under all its forms—cosmography and astronomy; but then it removed him from the throne. The son of the royal princess gave himself up with the same zeal and absolute submission to his duties as chief scribe, to which was also attached the function of inspector of different *nomes*, or provinces, of Egypt.

Was Osarsiph as proud as he was alleged to be? Yes, if it is pride that makes the captive lion raise its head and look out on the horizon behind the bars of its cage, without even seeing the passers-by, who stare at him, wondering. Yes, if it is from pride that the eagle, tied down by a chain, feels a thrill pass over the whole of his plumage, and with outstretched neck and extended wings looks fixedly at the sun. Like

all strong men marked out for some great work, Osarsiph could not regard himself as subjected to some blind Destiny ; he felt that a mysterious Providence was keeping watch over him, leading him to a certain goal.

Whilst he was a sacred scribe, Osarsiph was sent to inspect the Delta. The Hebrews, tributaries of Egypt, who at that time dwelt in the valley of Goshen, were subjected to the roughest of tasks. Rameses II. was joining Pelusium to Heliopolis by a chain of fortresses. All the *nomes* of Egypt were to add their contingent of labourers to these gigantic works. The Beni-Israel had the hardest tasks of all ; for the most part they were hewers of stone and makers of bricks. Proud and independent, they did not bow so readily as did the natives beneath the blows of the Egyptian police, but murmured in revolt and sometimes returned blow for blow. The priest of Osiris could not help feeling secret sympathy with these " stiff-necked," intractable human beings, whose Elders, faithful to the tradition of Abraham, simply worshipped the one God ; who revered their chiefs, their *hags* and *zakens*, though they rebelled against the yoke of slavery and protested against injustice. One day he saw an Egyptian warder showering down blows on

a weaponless Hebrew. His heart leapt within him, and, flinging himself upon the Egyptian, he snatched from him his weapon and struck him dead. This act, committed in a burst of generous indignation, was the turning point of his life. The priests of Osiris who committed murder were severely judged by the sacerdotal college. Pharaoh already suspected that his sister's son was a usurper. The scribe's life hung by a mere thread. He preferred exile, wishing to impose on himself expiation for his crime. Everything impelled him towards the solitude of the wilderness, the immense unknown; his own desire, the presentiment of his mission, and, above all else, that inner, mysterious though irresistible voice which whispered from time to time: "Go! It is thy destiny!"

Beyond the Red Sea and the peninsula of Sinai, in the land of Midian, there was a temple which was not dependent on the Egyptian priesthood. This region extended like a green band between the gulf of Elam and the wilderness of Arabia. In the distance beyond an arm of the sea could be seen the sombre pile of Sinai and its bare summit. Locked in between the desert and the Red Sea, and protected by a shrub-covered volcano, this isolated country was

sheltered from invasion. The temple was consecrated to Osiris, but the sovereign God was also worshipped there under the name of Elohim. This sanctuary, Ethiopian in its origin, served as a religious centre for such Arabs, Semites, and men of the black race as sought after initiation. For centuries past, Sinai and Horeb had thus been the mystic centre of a monotheistic cult. The bare, wild grandeur of the mountain, as it rose in solitary isolation between Egypt and Arabia, called up the idea of the one God. Many pilgrims from amongst the Semites came there to worship Elohim. They would stay several days, fasting and praying, in the caves and passages dug out of the sides of Mount Sinai. Previously, they went for purification and instruction to the temple of Midian. It was in this spot that Osarsiph took refuge.

The high priest of Midian or the Raguel (God's overseer) was then called Jethro.[1] He was a dark-skinned man, belonging to the purest type of the ancient Ethiopian race, which had reigned over Egypt four or five thousand years before Rameses, and had not lost its tradition, which

[1] Exod. iii. 1. Later on (Num. xii. i.), after the Exodus, Aaron and Miriam, brother and sister of Moses, according to the Bible, reproached him for having married an Ethiopian woman. Jethro Zipporah's father, belonged accordingly to this race.

dated back to the oldest races on the globe Jethro was neither inspired nor a man of action, but he was a great sage. His memory and the stone libraries of his temple were treasure-houses of science. Besides, he was the protector of the wandering tribes of the desert, the nomadic Semites, Libyans, and Arabs. With their vague aspirations after the one God, they represented something immutable in the midst of ephemeral cults and crumbling civilisations. In them could be felt, as it were, the presence of the Eternal, the memorial of long past ages, the mighty peace of Elohim. Jethro was the spiritual father of these free, untamed warriors ; he knew their soul, their real nature, and had a presentiment of their destiny. When Osarsiph came to ask shelter from him in the name of Osiris-Elohim, he welcomed him with open arms. Perhaps in this fugitive he immediately saw the man destined to become the prophet of the banished people, the leader of the children of God.

At first Osarsiph wished to subject himself to the expiation imposed on murderers by the law of the initiates. When a priest of Osiris had committed a murder, even an involuntary one, he was regarded as having lost the benefits of his

anticipated resurrection "in the light of Osiris," a privilege he had obtained through having successfully passed through the tests of initiation, and which placed him far above the generality of mankind. To expiate his crime and regain the inner light he must submit to severer tests and once more expose himself to death. After a lengthened fast, by the aid of certain beverages, the priest was plunged into a lethargic sleep and then deposited in a temple vault. There he remained for days, sometimes for weeks.[1] During this time he was supposed to journey into the Beyond, into Erebus or the region of the Amenti, in which move the souls of the dead which have not yet become detached from the atmosphere of earth. There he must seek out his victim, submit to his anguish and pain, obtain his pardon, and help him to find the path of light. Then only was he regarded as having expiated his murder, then only was his astral body purified from the dark stains with which the poisoned breath and the imprecations of the victim had polluted it. From this real or imaginary journey, however,

[1] Travellers of our own times have noted that Indian fakirs have had themselves buried after being plunged into a cataleptic sleep, stating the exact day on which they were to be unearthed. One of them, after three weeks' burial, was discovered to be alive, healthy and sound.

the guilty man might well not return, and often when the priests went to arouse the expiatist from his lethargic slumber they found nothing but a corpse.

Osarsiph unhesitatingly submitted to this test and to several others. The murder he had committed had enabled him to understand the immutable nature of certain moral laws and the deep torture their infraction leaves in the depths of conscience. With utmost abnegation he offered his being as a holocaust to Osiris, asking for strength if he returned to the light of earth, to show forth the law of justice. When Osarsiph came out of the awful sleep in the subterranean vault of the temple of Midian, he felt completely transformed. His past life had become separated from him, as it were, Egypt had ceased to be his home, and before him stretched the immense wilderness with its wandering nomads: a new field of action. He looked at the mountain of Elohim on the horizon and, for the first time, like a storm vision in the clouds of Sinai, the idea of his mission passed before his eyes. He must form of these wandering tribes a fighting people, to represent the law of the supreme God in the midst of the idolatry of cults and the anarchy of nations—a people which

should carry to future ages the truth sealed in the golden ark of initiation.

On that day, in order to mark the new era beginning in his life, Osarsiph assumed the name of Moses, signifying: "The saved." [1]

[1] The seven daughters of Jethro mentioned in the Bible (Exodus ii. 16–20) have evidently a symbolical meaning, as is the case with the whole of this narrative, which has reached us in a legendary and popular form. It is scarcely likely that the priest of a great temple would set his daughters to feed his flocks, and reduce an Egyptian priest to the *rôle* of a shepherd. Jethro's seven daughters symbolise seven virtues, which the initiate was forced to master if he would drink of the well of truth. In the story of Hagar and Ishmael this well is called "the well of the Living One who sees me."

CHAPTER III

THE SEPHER BERESHIT

MOSES married Zipporah, Jethro's daughter, and stayed for many years with the sage of Midian. Thanks to the Ethiopian and Chaldæan traditions he found in the temple, he was able to complete and verify what he had learned in the Egyptian sanctuaries, to extend a backward glance over the most ancient cycles of mankind, and by induction reach out into the distant horizons of the future. It was during his stay with Jethro that he found two books on cosmogony quoted in Genesis: *The Wars of Jehovah* and *The Generations of Adam*. Into the study of these he plunged with the utmost ardour.

His loins must be well girt for the work he was meditating. Before him, Rama, Krishna, Hermes, Zoroaster, and Fo-Hi had created religions for peoples; Moses determined to create a people for the eternal religion. A powerful foundation was needed for so bold, novel, and colossal a project. Moses therefore wrote his *Sepher Bereshit*, his *Book of Origins*, a concentrated

synthesis of the past and a framework of the future science ; key to the mysteries, torch of the initiates, rallying-point for the whole nation.

Let us try to see what Genesis meant in the mind of Moses. Here, indeed, it shed another light, embracing worlds far vaster than the childish world and the insignificant earth set forth in the Greek translation of the Bible, the Septuagint, or in the Latin translation of Saint Jerome, the Vulgate.

Present-day Biblical exegesis has popularised the idea that Genesis is not the work of Moses, that it is quite possible this prophet never existed, and is simply a legendary character, invented four or five years later by the Jewish priesthood, to give itself a divine origin. Modern criticism founds this opinion on the fact that Genesis consists of different fragments (Elohistic and Jehovistic) pieced together, and that its present form is at least four hundred years more recent than the time when Israel left the land of Egypt. The facts established by modern criticism, with reference to the time of publication of the facts we possess, are exact ; the conclusions drawn therefrom are arbitrary and illogical. Because the Elohistic and the Jehovistic writers produced their works four hundred years after the Exodus, it by no means follows that they were the in-

ventors of Genesis, and that they were not working from a previous—perhaps imperfectly-understood—document. Because the Pentateuch gives us a legendary account of the life of Moses, it does not follow that it contains no truth at all. Moses becomes a living force; the whole of his wonderful career is explained when we begin by placing him back again in his native surroundings—the solar temple of Memphis. Finally, even the profound meanings of Genesis can only be unfolded in the light of the torches snatched from the initiation of Isis and Osiris.

No religion is ever constituted without an initiator. The Judges, the Prophets, the whole history of Israel are proofs of Moses; even Jesus cannot be conceived of without him. Genesis contains the essence of the Mosaic tradition. Whatever transformations it may have undergone, the venerable mummy, beneath priestly wrappings and the dust of centuries, must contain the root idea, the living thought, the testament of the Prophet of Israel.

Israel gravitates round Moses as certainly and fatally as the earth turns round the sun. This being granted, however, it is quite another thing to discover the root ideas of Genesis—what it was that Moses wished to bequeath to posterity

in this secret testament of the Sepher Bereshit. The problem can only be solved from the esoteric point of view, and may be stated as follows:— In his capacity as Egyptian initiate, Moses must be at the summit of Egyptian science, which acknowledges, as does our own, the immutability of the laws of the universe, the development of the worlds by gradual evolution, and which had, besides, wide, precise and well-reasoned ideas as to the soul and invisible Nature. If such was the science of Moses—and how could it be otherwise with the priest of Osiris?—in what way is it to be reconciled with the childish ideas in Genesis regarding the creation of the world and the origin of man? Does not, perchance, this story of creation, which, interpreted literally, brings a smile to the face of a schoolboy in these days, conceal a profound symbolical meaning, and is there no key to open it? What is this meaning? Where is this key to be found?

It may be found (*a*) in Egyptian symbology; (*b*) in that of all the religions of the ancient cycle; (*c*) in the synthesis of the doctrine of the initiates, as resulting from comparison with esoteric teaching, from Vedic India to the Christian initiates of the early centuries.

The priests of Egypt, so say the Greek

authors, had three ways of expressing their thought. "The first was clear and simple, the second symbolical and figurative, the third sacred and hieroglyphic. The same word assumed, at their will, either the literal, the figurative, or the transcendental meaning. Such was the genius of their language. Heraclitus well expressed this difference when he designated this language as being *speaking*, *signifying*, and *concealing*." [1]

In the theogonic and cosmogonic sciences the Egyptian priests always employed the third method of writing. Their hieroglyphs had three corresponding and distinct meanings. The two latter could not be understood without a key. This enigmatical, concentrated method of writing itself depended upon a fundamental dogma of the teaching of Hermes, in accordance with which one same law governs the natural, the human, and the divine worlds. This language, wonderfully concise, unintelligible to the masses, could readily be understood by the adept; for, by means of a single sign it summoned forth origins, causes and effects which radiate out from divinity into blind nature, human consciousness, and the world of pure spirit. Thanks to this writing, the adept comprehended all three worlds at a single glance.

[1] Fabre d'Olivet, *Vers dorés de Pythagore*.

No one doubts, granted Moses' education, that he wrote Genesis in Egyptian hieroglyphs of three meanings. The keys and the oral explanation he confided to his successors. When, in Solomon's time, Genesis was translated into Phœnician characters; when, after the Babylonian captivity, Esdras wrote it in the Aramæan characters of the Chaldæans, the Jewish priesthood could no longer interpret these keys except very imperfectly. Finally, when we come to the Greek translators of the Bible, they had only a very faint idea of the esoteric meaning of the texts. Saint Jerome, notwithstanding his great intellect and the seriousness of his purpose, when he made his Latin translation from the Hebrew text, could not fathom the original meaning; and, had he done so, it would have been his duty not to divulge it. Accordingly, when we read Genesis in our translations, we obtain only the elementary, the inferior meaning. Whether they wish it or not, even expounders and theologians, orthodox or free-thinkers, understand the Hebrew text only through the *Vulgate*. The comparative and superlative meaning, the true one, escapes them. None the less does it remain mysteriously buried in the Hebrew text, whose roots go deep down, right into the sacred language of the temples—

a language remodelled by Moses, in which each vowel and consonant had a universal signification *en rapport* with the acoustic value of the letter and the mental condition of the man who uttered it. For such as are intuitive this profound meaning sometimes leaps forth, like a spark of fire, from the text; for such as are seers it shines in the phonetic structure of the words adopted or invented by Moses—magic syllables in which the initiate of Osiris framed his thought as bell-metal is shaped in a perfect mould. By the study of this phonetic science which bears the impress of the sacred language of ancient temples, by the keys with which we are supplied in the Kabbala, some of which date back to the times of Moses, and finally, by comparative esoterism, we are in a position at the present time to reconstitute and catch some glimpse of the real Genesis. Then the thought of Moses leaps forth, flashing like gold from the furnace of the centuries, the dross of an elementary theology and the ashes of negative criticism.[1]

[1] The true restorer of the cosmogony of Moses is a man of genius now almost forgotten, but one to whom France will do justice when esoteric, that is, integral and religious science comes to be rebuilt on its own indestructible foundations. Fabre d'Olivet could not be understood by his contemporaries, for he was a century in advance of his day. Universal in concept, he possessed in equal degree three qualities, the union of which creates transcendental intelligence: intui-

Two examples will suffice to throw light on what the sacred language of the ancient temples was, and how the three meanings correspond with one another in the symbols of Egypt and in those of Genesis. On innumerable Egyptian monu-

tion, analysis and synthesis. Born at Ganges (Hérault) in 1767, he took up the study of the mystical doctrines of the East, after having acquired a profound knowledge of the sciences, philosophies, and literatures of the West. Court de Gébelin, in his *Monde primitif*, opened up for him the first faint glimmerings on the mystical meaning of the myths of antiquity and on the sacred language of the temples. To initiate himself into the doctrines of the East, he learnt Chinese, Sanscrit, Arabic and Hebrew. In 1815 he published his principal work, *La Langue hébraïque restituée.* This book contains (*a*) an introductory dissertation on the origin of speech; (*b*) a Hebrew grammar founded on new principles; (*c*) Hebrew roots regarded in the light of etymological science; (*d*) a preliminary discourse; (*e*) a French and English translation of the first ten chapters of Genesis, containing the cosmogony of Moses. This translation is accompanied by a commentary of the deepest interest. Here I can do nothing more than sum up the principles and substance of this book, so full of revelation. It is penetrated with the most profound esoteric spirit and built up according to the most rigorous scientific method. The method Fabre d'Olivet employs, in order to enter into the inner meaning of the Hebrew text of Genesis, is a comparison of Hebrew with Arabic, Syriac, Aramæan and Chaldæan, *from the view-point of primitive and universal roots,* of which he supplies an admirable lexicon, grounded on examples from all languages—a lexicon capable of serving as a key to the sacred names in all nations. Of all esoteric books on the Old Testament, the one by d'Olivet affords the most trustworthy interpretations. In addition, it gives a luminous exposition of the history of the Bible and the apparent reasons for which its hidden meaning has become lost, and has, up to the present, been utterly ignored by official science and theology.

After speaking of this book, I will say a few words of another more recent work, the fruit of the former, and which, in addition to its own merit, possesses that of calling the attention of some independent seekers to its original inspirer This book is the *Mission des Juifs*, by

ments may be seen a woman with a crown on her head, holding the *crux ansata*, the symbol of eternal life, in one hand, and in the other a sceptre in the form of a lotus flower, the symbol of initiation.

M. Saint-Yves d'Alveydre (1884, Calmann Lévy). M. Saint-Yves is indebted for his philosophical initiation to the books of Fabre d'Olivet. His interpretation of Genesis is essentially that of the *Langue hébraïque restitutée*, his metaphysics are those of the *Vers dorés de Pythagore*, whilst his philosophy of history and the general framework of his book are borrowed from the *Histoire philosophique du genre humain*. Picking up these root-ideas, adding to them his own materials and pruning them at his own pleasure, he has constructed a new edifice of immense wealth and composite style, though of unequal worth. His object is a double one: to prove that the science and religion of Moses were the necessary resultant of the religious movements which preceded it in Asia and Egypt, on which problems Fabre d'Olivet in his works of genius had already thrown considerable light; and then to prove that ternary government by arbitration, consisting of the three powers, economical, judicial, and religious or scientific, has at all times been a corollary of the doctrines of the initiates and a constitutive part of the religions of the ancient cycle before Greece. Such is M. Saint-Yves' own idea—a fertile one and worthy of the profoundest attention. He calls it *synarchy;* in it he finds social, organic law, the sole hope of salvation for the future. This is not the place to examine how far the author has historically proved his thesis. M. Saint-Yves does not like to quote from what origins he obtains his information; he proceeds too often by simple affirmation and is not afraid of hazardous hypotheses, whenever they favour his preconceived idea. His book, however, of rare spiritual worth and immense esoteric knowledge, contains many pages of lofty inspiration and of novel, profound views. My ideas differ from his in many respects, especially in the conception of Moses, whom, in my opinion, M. Saint-Yves has set forth in too legendary and gigantic proportions. With this reserve, I gladly acknowledge the great value of this extraordinary book, to which I am largely indebted. Whatever be the opinion held regarding the work of M. Saint-Yves, it has one merit we must reverence, that of a whole life consecrated to one idea. See his *Mission des Souverains* and his *France vraie*, in which works M. Saint-Yves has rendered justice, though rather tardily and somewhat grudgingly, to his master, Fabre d'Olivet.

This is the goddess ISIS. Now Isis has three different meanings. In the positive mood it typifies Woman ; consequently the whole female sex. Comparatively it personifies the totality of terrestrial nature with all its powers of conception. Superlatively it symbolises celestial and invisible Nature, the element proper to souls and spirits, light, spiritual and intelligible in itself, which alone confers initiation. The symbol corresponding to Isis in the text of Genesis and in the Jewish-Christian mind is EVE, Heva, the eternal woman. This Eve is not only the wife of Adam, she is also the spouse of God. She constitutes three-quarters of his essence, for the name of the Eternal IEVE, which we have incorrectly called Jehovah and Javeh, is composed of the prefix *Jod* and the name of Eve. Once every year the high priest of Jerusalem uttered the divine name, spelling it out, letter by letter, in the following way : *Jod*, *hè*, *vau*, *hè*. The first expressed the divine thought[1] and the theogonic sciences ; the three letters in the name of Eve expressed the three orders of Nature,[2] the three worlds in which this thought is realised, and consequently the cosmogonic, psychical, and physical sciences corresponding thereto. The

[1] The *natura naturans* of Spinoza.
[2] The *natura naturata* of the same.

Ineffable contains in the depths of his being the masculine Eternal and the feminine Eternal. The indissoluble union of the two produces his power and his mystery. Moses, the sworn enemy of every image of divinity, did not tell this to the people, though he recorded it figuratively in the construction of the divine name, explaining it to his adepts. Thus Nature, veiled in the Judaic cult, lies concealed in the very name of God. Adam's spouse, the guilty and charming, though inquisitive woman, reveals to us her deep affinities with the terrestrial and divine Isis, the mother of the gods.[1]

Another example. A character playing a large part in the history of Adam and Eve is the serpent. In Genesis it is called Nâchâsh. Now, what did the serpent signify in the ancient temples? The

[1] The following is the manner in which Fabre d'Olivet explains the name of IEVE: "This name offers the sign indicating life, repeated, and forming the essentially living root EE (חח). This root is never used as a substantive, and is the only one which has this privilege. From its very foundation it is not only a verb, but the one verb, from which the rest are but derivatives; in a word, the verb חוה (EVE) *to be, being.* Here, as may be seen, and as I have taken care to explain in my grammar, the intelligible sign ו (Vau) is in the middle of the root of life. Moses, taking this verb *par excellence* to form from it the proper name or noun of the Being of beings, adds to it the sign of potential manifestation and of eternity י (I), and thus obtains יהוה (IEVE) in which the optional *being* is placed between a beginningless past and an endless future. Accordingly, this admirable name signifies exactly: the Being who is, who was, and who is to be.

mysteries of India, Egypt, and Greece reply in one voice: The serpent curled in a circle signifies universal life, whose magic agent is the astral light In an even deeper meaning Nâchâsh signifies the force which sets this life in motion, the attraction of self for self, in which Geoffrey Saint-Hilaire saw the reason for universal gravitation. The Greeks called it Eros, Love or Desire. Now apply these two meanings to the story of Adam and Eve and the serpent, and you will see that the fall of the first couple, the famous original sin, suddenly becomes the mighty unrolling of the divine, universal Nature with its kingdoms, classes and species in the formidable and inevitable circle of life.

These two examples now enable us to cast a glance into the mysteries of the Mosaic Genesis. We have already obtained some idea as to what cosmogony was to an initiate of old, and what distinguished it from cosmogony in the modern sense of the word.

In modern science cosmogony is reduced to a cosmography. Therein is found the description of a portion of the visible universe, with an investigation into the linking together of physical causes and effects within a given sphere. It is, for instance, Laplace's system of the world,

in which the formation of our solar system is conjectured from its present working, and deduced to be nothing but matter in movement; hypothesis, pure and simple. Again it is the history of the earth, of which the superposed layers of soil are irrefutable witnesses. Ancient science was not ignorant of this development of the visible universe, and though it may have had regarding it less precise notions than modern science has, it had, all the same, intuitively formulated the general laws thereof.

This, however, to the sages of India and Egypt, was nothing but the outer aspect of the world, its reflex movement. They sought an explanation in its inner aspect, its direct, original movement, which they found in another order of laws revealing itself to our intelligence. To ancient science the boundless universe was not dead matter governed by mechanical laws, but a living whole, endowed with intelligence, soul and will. This great sacred animal had innumerable organs corresponding with its infinite faculties. As in the human body, movements are the result of the thinking soul, the acting will—so, in the eyes of the scientists of old, *the visible order of the universe was nothing but the reflection of an invisible order;* that is to say, of cosmogonic forces and spiritual

monads, kingdoms, genera, species which, through their perpetual *involution* into matter, produce the *evolution* of life. Instead of modern science considering only the outside, the shell of the universe, the object of science in the temples of old was to reveal the interior, to lay bare its concealed mechanism. Ancient science did not extract intelligence from matter, but rather matter from intelligence. It did not cause the universe to spring into being from the blind dance of atoms ; it generated atoms by vibrations of the universal soul. In a word, it proceeded in concentric circles from the universal to the particular, from the Invisible to the Visible, from pure Spirit to organised Substance, from God to man. This descending order of Forces and Souls, in inverse ratio to the ascending order of Life and Bodies, was ontology or the science of intelligible principles, and formed the foundation of cosmogony.

All the great initiations of India and Egypt, of Judæa and Greece ; those of Krishna and Hermes, of Moses and Orpheus, have been acquainted, under different forms, with this order of principles and powers, of souls and generations, coming down from the one first cause, the ineffable Father.

The descending order of incarnations is simul-

taneous with the ascending order of lives, and alone makes it understood. Involution produces evolution and explains it.

In Greece the male and Doric temples, those of Jupiter and Apollo—that at Delphi especially—were the only ones which were thoroughly acquainted with the descending order. The Ionic or feminine temples knew it only in imperfect fashion. As the entire Greek civilisation was Ionic, Doric science and the Doric order were more and more veiled by it. None the less is it certain that its greatest initiators, heroes, and philosophers, from Orpheus to Pythagoras, from Pythagoras to Plato, and from the latter to the Alexandrians, spring from this order. They all recognised Hermes as their master.

Let us now return to Genesis. In the mind of Moses, that other son of Hermes, the first ten chapters of Genesis constituted a veritable ontology, according to the order and filiation of principles. Everything that begins must have an end. Genesis relates both evolution in time and creation in eternity, the only one worthy of God.

I intend to offer in *Pythagoras* a living picture of esoteric theogony and cosmogony in a form less abstract than that of Moses and more in harmony with modern mentality. Notwithstand-

ing the polytheistic form and the extreme diversity of the symbols, the meaning of this Pythagorean cosmogony, according to Orphic initiation and the sanctuaries of Apollo, is, at bottom, identical with that of the prophet of Israel. In Pythagoras it is illumined, so to speak, by its natural complement: the doctrine of the soul and of its evolution. In the Greek sanctuaries it was taught under the symbols of the myth of Persephone. It was called *the terrestrial and celestial story of Psyche.* This story, corresponding to what Christianity calls the *Redemption,* is altogether absent from the Old Testament. Not that Moses and the prophets were ignorant of it, but they regarded it as being too lofty a doctrine to be taught to the masses, so it was reserved for the oral tradition of the initiates. The divine Psyche is to remain so long concealed beneath the Hermetic symbols of Israel, only to be personified in the ethereal and luminous coming of the Christ.

The cosmogony of Moses possesses the stern conciseness of the Semitic and the mathematical precision of the Egyptian genius. The style of the narrative calls to mind the figures found inside the tombs of the kings; in their dry, severe stiffness and rigid bareness they contain an impenetrable mystery. The *ensemble* makes

one think of a Cyclopean building; though here and there, like a torrent of lava between the giant rocks, the thought of Moses, as revealed in the thrilling verses of the translators, pours forth with all the impetuosity of fiery flame from a volcanic eruption. In the first few chapters, incomparable in their majesty, one feels the very life-breath of Elohim, as He turns over, one by one, the ponderous pages of the universe.

Before leaving them, let us cast one more glance at some of those powerful hieroglyphs composed by the prophet of Sinai. Like the door of a subterranean temple, each of them opens on to a gallery of occult truths, which, like motionless lamps, light up the series of worlds and times. Using the keys of initiation, we will endeavour to penetrate into the temple and see these strange symbols, these magic formulas in their power of evocation, as the initiate of Osiris saw them when they issued in fiery letters from the furnace of his mind.

In a crypt of the temple of Jethro, Moses is seated alone on a sarcophagus, plunged in meditation. Walls and pilasters are covered with hieroglyphs and paintings representing the names and figures of the gods of all the nations on earth. These symbols sum up the history of

vanished cycles and foretell future ones. A naphtha lamp, set on the ground, casts a faint glimmer on to these signs, each of which speaks to him its own language. No longer does he see anything of the outer world; within himself he seeks the Word of his book, the reflection of his work, Speech which is to become Action. The lamp has flickered out; but before his inner eye, in the darkness of the crypt, flashes forth the name—

IEVE.

The first letter "I" is of the white colour of light; the other three shine like a changing fire, glowing with all the colours of the rainbow. How strange the life hidden in these characters! In the first letter Moses perceives the masculine principle, Osiris, the creative Spirit *par excellence;* in Eve the faculty of conception, the celestial Isis who forms part thereof. Thus the divine faculties, which contain in potentiality all worlds, are unfolded and co-ordinated in the heart of God. By their perfect union the ineffable Father and Mother form the Son, the living Word who creates the universe. This is the mystery of mysteries, hidden from mortal sense, but speaking by the sign of the Eternal, as Spirit speaks to

Spirit. The sacred tetragram shines with ever intenser light. Moses sees the three worlds, all the kingdoms of Nature, and the sublime order of the sciences issue from it in giant flashes. Then his ardent gaze is fixed on the masculine sign of the creative Spirit. It he invokes in order to descend the order of creations and, from the sovereign will, to draw strength to accomplish his own creation, after contemplating the works of the Eternal.

And now, through the darkness of the crypt, there shines the other divine name:

ELOHIM.

This signifies to the initiate: *He—The Gods, the God of Gods.*[1] This is no longer Being, retiring within himself and into the Absolute, but the Lord of the worlds, whose thought expands in millions of stars, movable spheres of floating universes. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The heaven at first, however, was only the thought of boundless time and space, inhabited by silence and void. "And

[1] *Elohim* is the plural of *Elo*, the name given to the Supreme Being by the Hebrews and the Chaldæans, and itself derived from the root El, denoting elevation, strength, and expansive power, and signifying, in a universal sense, God. *Hoa*, i.e. *He*, is one of the sacred names for divinity in Hebrew, Chaldaic, Syriac, Ethiopian, and Arabic.—Fabre d'Olivet, *La langue hébraïque restituée.*

the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."[1] What is the first thing that will come forth? A sun? An earth? A nebula? Any substance whatever of the visible world? No. The first thing born therefrom was *Aour*, Light. But this light is not physical; it is intelligible light, born of the thrill of celestial Isis in the bosom of the Infinite; universal soul and astral light, substance which makes souls, from which they come forth as though of an ethereal fluid; subtle element by which thought is transmitted to endless distances; divine light, both previous and subsequent to that of all suns. First, it spreads out into the Infinite; it is the powerful respiration of God; then it comes back upon itself in an outburst of love, the deep aspiration of the Eternal. In the billows of the divine ether, the astral forms of worlds and beings quiver as though beneath a translucent veil. The Mage-Seer finds all this summed up in the words he

[1] "*Rouah Elohim*, the breath of God, indicates figuratively a movement in the direction of expansion or dilatation. In a hieroglyphic sense, it is the force opposed to that of darkness. And if the word *darkness* denotes a power of compression, the word *rouah* will denote a power of expansion. In both there will be found that eternal system of two opposing forces which sages and savants of every age, from Parmenides and Pythagoras down to Descartes and Newton, have seen in Nature and called by different names."—Fabre d'Olivet, *Langue hébraïque*.

utters, words which shine through the darkness in dazzling characters:

ROUA ELOHIM AOUR.[1]

"Let there be light, and there was light." The breath of Elohim is Light!

From the bosom of this primitive, immaterial light issue the first six days of Creation, *i.e.* the seeds, origins, forms, and living souls of all things. It is the Universe in potentiality, before the letter and according to the Spirit. And what is the last word of Creation, the formula which sums up Being in action, the living Word in which appears the first and last thought of absolute Being? It is

ADAM-EVE.

The *Man-Woman.*—This symbol by no means represents the first human couple on our earth, as the Churches teach and expositors believe, but God in action throughout the universe, and the

[1] *Breath, Elohim, Light.*—These three names are the hieroglyphic *résumé* of the second and third verses of Genesis. The Hebrew text of the third verse runs as follows in modern characters: *Wa, iaômer Aelohim iêhi aoûr, wa iêhi aoûr.* Here is the literal translation given by Fabre d'Olivet: "And he said He the Being of beings shall be made light; and was made light." The word *r-ou-a*, meaning breath, is found in the second verse. It will be noticed that the word *a-ou-r*, meaning light, is *r-ou-a* reversed. The divine breath, returning upon itself, creates intelligible light.

type of the human race; universal humanity throughout all the heavens. "God created man in his own image; male and female created he him." This divine couple is the universal word by which IEVE manifests his own nature in the worlds. The sphere he first inhabits and which the powerful mind of Moses understands is not the garden of Eden, the legendary terrestrial paradise, but the boundless temporal sphere of Zoroaster, the upper earth of Plato, the universal celestial kingdom, Heden, Hadama, substance of all the earths. What is to be the evolution of humanity in time and space? This, in concentrated form, Moses considers in the story of the fall. In Genesis, Psyche, the human Soul, is called Aïsha, another name for Eve.[1] Its home is *Shamaïm*, heaven. There it lives happy and blessed in the divine ether, though devoid of knowledge of itself. It enjoys heaven without understanding it. To understand, it must first have forgotten and then remembered; to love, it must first have lost and then won back. Only by pain and the fall will it know and understand. And what a profound

[1] Gen. ii. 23. *Aïsha*, the Soul, here assimilated to Woman, is the spouse of *Aïsh*, the Intellect, assimilated to Man. She is taken from him, she constitutes his inseparable half, his volitional faculty. The same relation exists between Dionysus and Persephone in the Orphic mysteries.

and tragic fall, so different from the literal one we read of in our childish Bible! Attracted towards the dark gloomy abyss by desire for knowledge, Aïsha lets herself fall. . . . She ceases to be the pure soul, having only a sidereal body and living on the divine ether. She clothes herself with a material body and enters the circle of generations. Her incarnations are not one, but a hundred, a thousand, in bodies of denser and denser matter according to the constellations she inhabits. She descends from world to world . . . descends and forgets. . . . A dark veil covers her inner eye; obliterated is the divine consciousness, dimmed the memory of heaven in the dense tissue of matter. Pale as a lost hope, a faint memory of her lost happiness still shines within! From this ray of light she is to be reborn, to regenerate herself!

Yes, Aïsha still lives in these two nude beings lying defenceless in a wild, savage land, beneath a hostile, thunder-threatening sky. Paradise lost? There is the immensity of the veiled heavens, both behind and before her!

In such a light does Moses contemplate the generations of Adam in the world.[1] Then he

[1] In the Samaritan version of the Bible, to the name of Adam there is added the epithet, *universal* or *infinite*. Accordingly we are dealing with the human race, the kingdom of man in heaven.

considers the destinies of man on earth. He sees both the cycles that have passed and the present one. In the terrestrial Aïsha, the soul of humanity, the consciousness of God had, in past times, shone with the fire of Agni, in the land of Cush, on the slopes of the Himalayas.

And now we find Aïsha ready to fall away into idolatry, subjected to hellish passions and Assyrian tyranny, amongst troubled nations and jealous gods. Moses vows that he will arouse her by establishing the worship of Elohim.

Not only the individual man but also collective humanity must be of the image of IEVE. But where is to be found the nation which will incarnate him, and be the living Word of humanity?

Then Moses, having conceived his book and his work, and sought out the profound darkness of the human soul, declares war on terrestrial Eve, on corrupt and feeble nature. To combat and restore it, he invokes the Spirit, the primal, omnipotent Fire, IEVE, to whose source he has just ascended. He feels that its outbreathings inflame and temper him like steel. Will is its name.

And in the darkness and silence of the crypt, Moses hears a voice coming from out the depths of his consciousness. In light-like vibrations it says, "Go to the mountain of God, *even* to Horeb."

CHAPTER IV

THE VISION OF SINAI

A SOMBRE mass of granite, looking so bare and ravine-cleft beneath the shining sun that one might say it had been furrowed with lightning-flashes, and carved out by the thunder: such is the summit of Sinai, the throne of Elohim, say the children of the desert. Over against Sinai rise the peaks of Serbal, less lofty than the other, though also rugged and wild-looking. In its sides are deep caves and copper mines. Between the two mountains lies a dark valley, a chaos of stones, which the Arabs call Horeb, the Erebus of the Semitic legend. This vale of desolation is gloomy and dark, when night and the shadow of Sinai fall on it, and even gloomier still when the mountain is topped with a helmet of clouds darting forth sinister gleams. Then a terrible wind howls down the narrow gorge. There Elohim is said to overthrow such as attempt to resist him, and fling them into the abyss, into which fall torrents of rain. There, too, say the Midianites,

roam the malevolent shades of the giants, the *Refaïm*, who hurl down rocks on such as attempt to scale the sacred mount. Popular tradition also has it that the God of Sinai at times appears in the lightning flash, like a Medusa head, adorned with eagles' plumes. Woe to those who behold his countenance! Death is their portion.

Thus spoke the nomads to one another at night, beneath the tents, when their camels and wives lay wrapt in slumber. The truth was that only the boldest among Jethro's initiates ascended to the cave of Serbal, often spending several days in fasting and prayer. Sages from Idumea had found inspiration there. It was a spot associated from bygone ages with supernatural visions, with Elohim or spirits of light. No priest or hunter would ever have consented to conduct the pilgrim to it.

Moses had fearlessly mounted by the ravine of Horeb. With intrepid heart he had crossed the valley of death and its chaos of rocks. Like every human effort, initiation has its phases of humility and of pride. After climbing the sides of the holy mountain, he had reached the summit of pride, for he had attained to the height of human power, he already felt himself one with the supreme Being. The purple sun was shedding his ardent

rays over the volcanic pile of Sinai, and the violet shadows were spread about the valleys, when Moses found himself at the entrance to a cave, whose mouth was protected by a scanty growth of turpentine-trees. He was preparing to enter when he was almost blinded by a sudden flash of light enveloping him. It appeared to him that the ground was burning beneath his feet, and that the granite mountains had become changed into a sea of flame. At the entrance to the grotto an apparition of dazzling light looked down on him, barring the path with his sword. Moses sank with his face on the ground, thunderstruck. His pride was now wholly broken. The Angel's glance had pierced him with its light. Then, with that profound intuition which is aroused in a visionary state, he had understood that this being was about to impose on him a terrible task. He would have liked to escape his mission, and return underground like a vile worm.

But a voice was heard, saying, "Moses! Moses!" And he replied, "Here am I!"

"Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

Moses hid his face in his hands; he was afraid of meeting the Angel's gaze.

The Angel said to him: "Thou who seekest Elohim, wherefore tremblest thou before me?"

"Who art thou?"

"A ray of Elohim, a solar Angel, a messenger of Him who is now and will be hereafter."

"What dost thou command me to do?"

"Thou shalt say to the children of Israel: The Eternal, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob hath sent me to you, to bring you out of the land of slavery."

"Who am I that I should bring out the children of Israel from Egypt?"

"Go," said the Angel, "for I will be with thee. I will put the fire of Elohim into thine heart, and His word on thy lips. For forty years hast thou called upon Him, and thy voice has reached unto Him. See, I lay hold of thee in His name. Son of Elohim, thou art mine for ever."

Moses, emboldened, exclaimed: "Show me Elohim! Grant me to see His living fire!"

He raised his head, but the flaming sea had vanished; swift as lightning, the Angel had disappeared. The sun had gone down upon the extinct volcanoes of Sinai; a silence of death was over the vale of Horeb, and a voice which seemed to roll along the vaults of heaven, losing itself in the infinitude of space, said, "I am That I am."

Moses came out of this vision overwhelmed with awe. For a moment, he believed that his body had been burnt up in the fire of the ether. But his spirit was stronger. On descending to the temple of Jethro, he found himself ready for his work. His living idea went in front of him, like the Angel armed with the fiery sword.

CHAPTER V

THE EXODUS—THE WILDERNESS—MAGIC AND THEURGY

THE plan of Moses was one of the most extraordinary and audacious that have ever been conceived by mortal mind. To rescue a people from the yoke of so powerful a nation as Egypt; to lead them to the conquest of a country occupied by hostile and better-armed populations; to drag them on for ten, twenty, forty years in the wilderness, devoured by thirst and wasted by hunger; to see them harassed, like high-spirited steeds, beneath the arrows of the Hittites and the Amalekites, ready to fall upon them and cut them to pieces; to isolate them along with the tabernacle of the Lord in the midst of these idolatrous nations; to impose on them monotheism with a rod of fire, and inspire such fear and veneration for this one God that he should incarnate himself in the flesh of the people, become its national symbol, the end of all its aspirations and its *raison d'être:* such was the gigantic task that Moses undertook.

The Exodus had long been arranged and thought out by the prophet, the principal Israelitish chiefs, and Jethro. To put his plan into execution, Moses took advantage of a time when Menephtah, his former companion, who had now become Pharaoh, was forced to resist the dreaded invasion of Mermaiou, king of the Libyans. The whole of the Egyptian army, being occupied in the direction of the west, was unable to hold back the Hebrews, so the emigration *en masse* was effected in peace and quiet.

Now we have the Beni-Israel on the march. This long stream of caravans, bearing tents on camels' backs and followed by immense flocks of cattle and sheep, is preparing to wind round the Red Sea. So far they consist of only a few thousand men, but later on there will be Canaanites, Edomites, Arabs, and Semites of all kinds, attracted and fascinated by the prophet of the wilderness, who summons them from every part to mould them at his will. The nucleus of this people is formed by the Beni-Israel, upright but stern men, obstinate and rebellious. Their *hags* or chiefs have taught them the worship of the One God. This worship constituted a lofty patriarchal tradition. In these primitive and violent natures, however, monotheism is still

nothing but a superior, an intermittent consciousness. No sooner do their evil passions come to the top than the instinct of polytheism, so natural to man, gains the upper hand. Then they fall back into popular superstitions, into sorcery and the idolatrous practices of the populations bordering on Egypt and Phœnicia, which Moses is to put down by stern, Draconian laws.

Around the prophet who rules this people is a group of priests presided over by Aaron, his brother initiate, and the prophetess Miriam, already representing feminine initiation in Israel. This group forms the priesthood. Along with them are seventy elected chiefs or laic initiates, grouping round the prophet of IEVE, who is to confide to them his secret doctrine and oral tradition, transmit a portion of his power, and at times admit them to share his inspirations and visions.

Into the heart of this group is borne the Golden Ark, the idea of which has been borrowed by Moses from the temples of Egypt, where it served as an arcanum for the books on theurgy. For his own personal designs, he had it cast again, after a new model. The ark of Israel is flanked by four golden cherubim, sphinx-like figures resembling the four symbolical animals of Ezekiel's vision. One has the head of a lion, another that

of a bull, the third that of an eagle, and the fourth that of a man. They personify the four universal elements: earth, water, air, and fire; as well as the four worlds represented by the letters of the divine tetragram. The cherubim protect the mercy-seat with their wings.

This ark is to be the instrument of the electrical and luminous phenomena produced by the magic of the priest of Osiris, phenomena which, magnified in legend, are destined to give birth to the biblical narratives. The golden ark also contains the Sepher Bereshit or Book of Cosmogony, written by Moses in Egyptian hieroglyphs, and the magic wand of the prophet, called in the Bible Moses' rod. It will also contain the Book of the Covenant, or the Law of Mount Sinai. Moses will call the ark the throne of Elohim; for in it lies the sacred tradition, the mission of Israel, the idea of IEVE.

What kind of political constitution did Moses give to his people? In this connection we must quote one of the most curious passages in Exodus. This passage appears all the more ancient and authentic inasmuch as it shows us the weak side of Moses, his tendency to sacerdotal pride and theocratic tyranny, kept in check by his Ethiopian initiator :—

And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening.

And when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did to the people, he said: What is this thing that thou doest to the people? Why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even?

And Moses said unto his father-in-law, Because the people come unto me to enquire of God.

When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws.

And Moses' father-in-law said unto him, The thing that thou doest is not good.

Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone.

Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt show them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.

Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee.

If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace.

So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father-in-law, and did all that he had said.[1]

This passage shows us that in the constitution of Israel established by Moses, the executive power was regarded as an emanation from the judicial power, and placed under the control of the sacerdotal authority. Such was the government bequeathed by Moses to his successors in accordance with the wise advice of Jethro. It remained so under the Judges, from Joshua to Samuel right on to the usurpation of Saul. Under the kings, the abased priesthood began to lose the genuine tradition of Moses which survived only in the prophets.

As we have said, Moses was not a patriot, but rather a tamer of nations, if we take into consideration the destinies of the whole of humanity. For him, Israel was only a means, universal religion was his aim ; his thoughts passed far beyond the nomads of his days, to future ages. From the time they left Egypt, to the death of Moses, the history of Israel was nothing but one long duel between the prophet and his people.

Moses first led the tribes of Israel to Sinai, into

[1] Exod. xviii. 13–24 The importance of this passage from the point of view of the social constitution of Israel has been justly pointed out by M. Saint-Yves in his fine volume, *La Mission des Juifs.*

the barren wilderness over against the mountain consecrated to Elohim by all the Semites, where he himself had received his revelation. On the spot where his Genius had taken hold of the prophet, Moses wished to take possession of his people and stamp on their brow the seal of IEVE: the ten commandments, a powerful *résumé* of the moral law and a complement of the transcendental truth contained in the hermetic book of the Ark.

Nothing could be more tragic than this first dialogue between the prophet and his people. Here took place strange scenes, terrible and sanguinary, leaving the impress of a red-hot iron in the mortified flesh of Israel. Beneath the amplifications and exaggerations of the Biblical narrative may be divined the possible reality of the facts.

The *élite* of the tribes is encamped on the plain of Pharan, at the entrance to a wild gorge leading to the rocks of Serbal. The threatening peak of Sinai overlooks this stony, volcanic land. Before the whole assembly, Moses solemnly announces that he will go to the mountain to consult Elohim, and bring back the written law on a table of stone. He orders the people to watch and fast, to await him in chastity and prayer. He leaves the portable Ark, covered by the tent of the tabernacle

in the care of the seventy elders. Then he disappears into the gorge, taking with him none but his faithful disciple Joshua.

Days pass; Moses does not return. At first the people are uneasy, then they murmur: "Wherefore bring us into this terrible wilderness, exposing us to the attacks of the Amalekites? Moses has promised to lead us to the land of Canaan, flowing with milk and honey, and here we are dying in the desert. Better slavery in Egypt than this wretched life. Would to God we had once again the flesh-pots we ate in Egypt! If the God of Moses is the true God, let him prove it, dispersing all his enemies and allowing us to enter at once into the land of promise." These murmurings increase; mutiny is rife, even the chiefs are disaffected.

And now a group of women appear, whispering and murmuring to one another. These are daughters of Moab, with dark-skinned, supple bodies and opulent forms, concubines or servants of some Edomite chiefs, who are friendly to Israel. They remember that they have been priestesses of Ashtaroth, and have celebrated the orgies of the goddess in the sacred woods of their own land. They feel that the time has come for them to regain their sway, and so they appear on

the spot, decked in gold and gaudy robes, like a troop of beautiful serpents issuing from the earth, their undulating forms shining in the sunlight. They mix with the rebels, regard them with glowing eyes, throw around them their arms ornamented with copper rings, and seduce them with fair-sounding words: "After all, who is this priest of Egypt and his God? He will now be lying dead on Sinai. The Refaïm will have flung him into the abyss. It is not he who will lead the tribes into Canaan. Let the children of Israel call upon the gods of Moab: Belphegor and Ashtaroth! These are gods who can be seen, gods who work miracles! They will lead them into the land of Canaan!" The rebels listen to the Moabite women, they rouse up one another, and the cry comes from the multitude: "Aaron, make us gods to proceed before us; as for Moses who made us depart from the land of Egypt, we know not what has become of him." Aaron tries in vain to calm the crowd. The daughters of Moab summon Phœnician priests who have come by caravan. These bring a wooden statue of Ashtaroth, which they raise aloft on a stone altar. Under penalty of death, the rebels force Aaron to make a golden calf, one of the forms that Belphegor assumed. They sacrifice

bulls and he-goats to strange gods, they eat and drink, whilst lascivious dances, led by the daughters of Moab, begin around the idols, to the sound of *nebels*, *kinnors*, and tabors played by women.

The seventy elders chosen by Moses to guard the Ark have vainly tried by threats and entreaty to stop this disordered state of things. Now they sit down on the ground, their heads covered with sackcloth and ashes. Crouching round the tabernacle of the Ark, they hear with the utmost consternation all kinds of wild cries and voluptuous songs, invocations to the accursed gods, demons of cruelty and lust. They are horrified to see this people in a debauch of joy and revolt against its God. What will become of the Ark, the Book, and Israel, if Moses does not return?

Moses, however, does come back. After his long, lonely meditation on the Mount of Elohim, he brings down the Law on tablets of stone.[1] Entering the camp, he sees the dances, the bacchanalia of his people, before the idols of Ashtaroth and Belphegor. At the sight of the priest of Osiris, the prophet of Elohim, the

[1] In ancient times only the most sacred things were written on stone. The hierophant of Eleusis would read to the initiates from tablets of stone, things they swore to reveal to no one, and which were found written nowhere else.

dances stop, the strange priests take to flight and the rebels begin to tremble. Moses' anger bursts forth like a devouring fire. He breaks the stone tablets, they feel that he would thus crush the whole people, that God has taken possession of him.

Israel trembles, though the rebels dart at the prophet glances of hatred, mingled with fear. A single hesitating word or gesture from the prophet-chief, and the hydra of idolatrous anarchy will erect against him its thousand heads and sweep away beneath a hail of stones the sacred Ark, the prophet, and the idea he represents. Behind Moses are the invisible powers protecting him. He sees that, above all else, he must raise the courage of the seventy elect, to equal his own, and through them influence the whole people. He invokes ELOHIM-IEVE, the male Spirit, the fire-principle, from the immensity of the heavens and from the depths of his own nature.

"Let the Seventy follow me!" he exclaimed; "let them take the Ark, and ascend with me the Mountain of God. As for this people, let them wait and tremble. I will bring back the judgment of Elohim."

The Levites remove from beneath the tent the golden Ark, all veiled, and the procession of the

seventy headed by the prophet, disappears in the defiles of Sinai. Impossible to say who tremble the more: the Levites at what they are about to see, or the people at the punishment Moses leaves impending over their heads, like an invisible sword.

"Ah! if only we could escape from the terrible hands of this priest of Osiris, this prophet of misfortune!" say the rebels. Hastily half the camp fold up the tents, saddle the camels, and prepare for flight. And now a strange twilight, a veil of dust spreads over the sky; a sharp north wind blows from the Red Sea, the wilderness assumes a dull, tawny colour, and great clouds pile up upon one another behind Sinai. Finally, the sky turns black. Gusts of wind carry along clouds of sand, and flashes of lightning cause the wheeling clouds which surround Sinai to burst into torrents of rain. Soon the thunderbolt crashes down, and its echoes fall on the camp in successive detonations. No doubt is felt by the people that this is the anger of Elohim, summoned forth by Moses. The daughters of Moab have disappeared. The idols are overthrown, the chiefs fling themselves on their faces to the ground, whilst the women and children hide behind the camels. This lasts for a whole day and night.

The lightning has struck the tents, killing men and beasts, and the thunder rolls incessantly.

Towards evening, the storm begins to pass away, though the clouds still hover on Sinai's summit and the sky remains black. At the entrance to the camp appear the Seventy, with Moses at their head. In the uncertain twilight, the countenances of the prophet and of his elect shine with supernatural light, as though they had brought back the reflection of a sublime, dazzling vision. Over the golden Ark and the fiery-winged cherubim flickers an electric ray like a phosphorescent column. Before this extraordinary sight, elders and people, men and women, draw back to a distance and fall to the ground.

"Let those who are for the Lord God, come to me!" said Moses.

Three-fourths of the chiefs of Israel take up their stand round Moses, the rebels remain in their tents hiding. Then the prophet advances and orders his faithful followers to put to the sword the priestesses of Ashtaroth and the instigators of the revolt, that Israel may tremble for ever before Elohim, and may remember the law of Sinai, and its first commandment: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or the likeness of any thing that is in heaven, in the waters, or under the earth."

It was by such a mixture of terror and mystery that Moses imposed law and worship on his people. The idea of IEVE had to be stamped in letters of fire on their souls ; but for such implacable measures, monotheism would never have triumphed over the invading polytheism of Phœnicia and Babylon.

What did the Seventy see on Sinai? Deuteronomy (xxxiii. 2) speaks of a mighty vision, of thousands of saints appearing in the midst of the storm on Sinai, in the light of IEVE. Did the sages of the former cycle, the ancient initiates of the Aryans of India, Persia and Egypt, all the noble sons of Asia, the land of God, come to aid Moses in his work, and exercise a decisive influence over the mind of his co-workers? The spiritual powers which keep guard over humanity are always at hand, but the veil separating us from them is torn asunder only on great occasions and for a few elect. However it be, Moses breathed into the Seventy the divine fire and energy of his own will. They were the firs temple, previous to Solomon's: the living temple,

the temple on the march, the heart of Israel, the royal light of God.

By means of the visions of Sinai and the execution *en masse* of the rebels, Moses obtained authority over the nomad Semites whom he ruled with a hand of iron. Similar scenes, however, followed by fresh manifestations of strength, were to be repeated during the marches and cross-marches towards the land of Canaan. Like Mohammed, Moses had to show at once the genius of a prophet, a warrior, and a social organiser. He had to struggle against weariness, calumny, and conspiracy. After the revolt of the people, he had to lower the pride of the Levite priests, who wished to be set on an equal footing with himself, and to be regarded as directly inspired by IEVE ; and then to crush the more dangerous conspiracies of ambitious chiefs like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who fomented a popular insurrection to overthrow the prophet and proclaim a king, as did the Israelites later on with Saul, in spite of Samuel's opposition. In this struggle, Moses is moved by alternatives of pity and indignation—the love of a father and the roaring of a lion against this people, which writhes beneath his determined will, to which, in spite of everything, it must submit. We find an

echo of this in the dialogues related in the Bible between the prophet and his God, dialogues which seem to reveal what is taking place in the depths of his soul.

In the Pentateuch, Moses triumphs over all obstacles by miracles which are more than improbable. Jehovah, conceived of as a personal God, is always at his disposal. He appears on the tabernacle as a shining cloud, which is called the glory of the Lord. Moses alone can enter—any profane person who approaches is struck down dead. The tabernacle of the congregation containing the ark plays in the Biblical narrative the *rôle* of a gigantic electric battery, which, once charged with the fire of Jehovah, scatters destruction amongst the people. The sons of Aaron, the two hundred and fifty followers of Korah and Dathan, along with fourteen thousand people, are killed by it at one and the same time. Besides this, Moses produces at a given moment, an earthquake, which engulfs the three revolting chiefs with their tents and families. This is described in terrible, awe-inspiring, poetical language. It is so exaggerated, however, of a nature so clearly legendary, that it would be puerile to discuss its reality. What gives an exotic character to these narratives above all else, is the *rôle* of an angry, fickle

God, played by Jehovah. He is always ready to destroy and thunder forth his wrath, whilst Moses represents mercy and wisdom. So childish a conception, one so utterly contradictory to Divinity, is no less alien to the consciousness of an initiate of Osiris, than to that of a Jesus.

And yet these colossal exaggerations appear to spring from certain phenomena due to the magical powers of Moses, and which are not without parallel in the traditions of the temples of old. This is the place to say what amount of credence may be given to the so-called miracles of Moses from the view-point of a rational theosophy and the elucidations of occult science. The production of electrical phenomena in divers forms by the will of powerful initiates is not attributed by antiquity to Moses alone. Chaldæan tradition ascribed it to the magi, the Greek and Latin traditions to certain priests of Jupiter and Apollo.[1] In similar cases, the phenomena are indeed of an

[1] Twice was an attack on the Temple of Delphi repulsed under similar circumstances. In 480 B.C., the troops of Xerxes attacked it, and retreated in terror before a storm, accompanied by flames issuing from the ground, and the fall of large blocks of rock.— *Herodotus.* In 279 B.C., the temple was again attacked by invading Gauls and Cymri. Delphi was defended by a small troop of Phocæans. The moment the barbarians were on the point of entering the temple, a storm burst forth, and the Gauls were defeated (see the *Histoire des Gaulois*, by Amédée Thierry, Book 2).

electrical nature. But the electricity of the terrestrial atmosphere must here have been set in motion by a subtler and more universal force which great adepts would be skilled in attracting, concentrating, and projecting. This force is called by the Brahmans, *ākashā*, by the magi of Chaldæa *the fire principle;* and by the Kabbalists of the Middle Ages *the great magic agent.* From the viewpoint of modern science it might be called *etheric force.* It can either be attracted directly or evoked by means of invisible, conscious, or semi-conscious agents filling the atmosphere of earth, and which the will of the *magi* is able to control. There is nothing in this theory opposed to a rational conception of the universe ; it is even indispensable to the explanation of a host of phenomena, which otherwise would remain incomprehensible. It need only be added that these phenomena are governed by immutable laws, always proportioned to the intellectual, moral, and magnetic strength of the adept.

What would be opposed to both reason and philosophy would be the setting in motion of the primary cause, God, or the immediate operation of this cause, by any being whatever, which would come to the same thing as identification of the individual with God. Only relatively does man

rise to him by thought or prayer ; by action or ecstasy. God exercises his action in the universe only indirectly and in hierarchies, by the universal and immutable laws which express his thought, as also through the members of terrestrial and divine humanity who represent him partially and proportionally in the infinitude of time and space.

This position once granted, we regard it as perfectly possible for Moses, sustained by the spiritual powers which protected him, and controlling etheric force with consummate science, to have been able to make use of the Ark as a kind of receptacle or concentrating agent of attraction, for the production of electrical phenomena of a most formidable nature. He insulated himself, his priests, and trusted companions by means of linen garments and odours which protected them from the discharges of the etheric fire. These phenomena, however, could only happen seldom and be limited in number ; they have been exaggerated in the priestly legend. To strike dead a few rebel chiefs or disobedient Levites by such a projection of fluid must have sufficed Moses, whose object was to strike terror into the hearts of the whole people, and to check revolt.

CHAPTER VI

THE DEATH OF MOSES

WHEN Moses had conducted his people to the borders of Canaan, he felt that his work was accomplished. What was IEVE-ELOHIM in the mind of the Seer of Sinai? Divine order seen from above through all the spheres of the universe and realised on the visible earth, under the image of the celestial hierarchies, and of eternal truth. Not in vain had he gazed on the face of the everlasting God, whose reflection is manifested everywhere. The Book was in the Ark, and the Ark was guarded by a mighty people, the living temple of the Lord. The worship of the One God was established on earth; the name of IEVE shone in flaming characters in the consciousness of Israel; though the stream of time rolls over the changing soul of humanity, it will never more efface the name of the One God.

These things Moses understood, so now he summoned the angel of death. He laid his hands on Joshua, his successor, before the temple, in

order that the Spirit of God might pass into him; then he blessed all mankind through the twelve tribes of Israel, and ascended Mount Nebo, followed by none but Joshua and two Levites. Aaron had already been "gathered unto his fathers," and Miriam the prophetess had taken the same journey. The turn of Moses had now come.

What must have been in the mind of the centenarian prophet as he beheld the camp of Israel disappear, and ascended into the sublime silence of Elohim? What were his feelings as he cast his eyes over the Promised Land, from Gilead to Jericho, the City of Palms? A true poet, Alfred de Vigny, depicting this mental condition with the pen of a master, shows him to us uttering the cry:—

> "*O Seigneur, j'ai vécu puissant et solitaire,*
> *Laissez-moi m'endormir du sommeil de la terre.*"[1]

This beautiful couplet is a more eloquent tribute to the soul of Moses than the commentaries of a hundred theologians. This soul is like the Great Pyramid of Gizeh, massive, bare, and dead without, but containing great mysteries within, and in its centre a sarcophagus, called by the initiates the Sarcophagus of the Resurrection. From that

[1] "Mighty and lone have I lived, O my Lord,
Let me now sleep the deep slumber of earth."

spot along a slanting passage may be seen the North Star. So did this impenetrable mind look from its centre to the final goal and object of all things.

Yes, all great men well know the solitude created by their very greatness; but Moses was more isolated than the rest, because his principle was more absolute, more transcendental. His God was the male principle *par excellence*, pure Spirit. To inculcate this principle in mankind he was obliged to declare war on the feminine principle, on the goddess Nature, Heve, the eternal Woman, who enters the soul of Earth and the heart of Man. He was to combat it without truce or mercy, not to destroy, but to subject and tame it. What wonder that Nature and Woman, between whom reigns a mysterious pact, trembled before him! What wonder they rejoiced at his departure; waiting, before they could raise their head once more, till the shadow of Moses had ceased to cast over them the presentiment of death! Such were doubtless the thoughts of the Seer as he ascended Nebo's barren sides. Men could not love him, for he had loved none but God. But would his work, at any rate, live? Would his people remain faithful to their mission? Alas! Fatal is the clairvoyance of the dying,

tragic the prophetic gift, tearing away every veil when the final hour has come! In proportion as the spirit of Moses detached itself from earth, he saw the terrible reality of the future—the treasons of Israel, anarchy raising erect its head, royalty succeeding the Judges, the crimes of the Kings defiling the Temple of the Lord, his book mutilated and misunderstood, his thoughts travestied and disparaged by ignorant or hypocritical priests, the apostasies of kings, the adultery of Judah with idolatrous nations, the pure tradition and sacred doctrine defiled, and the prophets, guardians of the living word, persecuted and driven into the depths of the wilderness.

Seated in a cave cut into Mount Nebo, Moses saw all this within himself. The cold hand of Death was already laid at his heart, his dread wing was hovering above the Seer's brow. Then once again the lion-hearted prophet roared out in anger against his people, summoning the vengeance of Elohim on the race of Judah. He raised his heavy arm. Joshua and the Levites present were struck with dismay as they heard these words leave the lips of the dying man: "The children of Israel have betrayed their God; let them be scattered to the four winds of heaven!"

Joshua and the Levites looked in terror at their

master, who no longer gave any sign of life. His last sentence had been a curse. Had he given up his last breath with it? No. Moses opened his eyes once again and said:—

"And the Lord said unto me . . . I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

"And it shall come to pass *that* whosoever shall not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require *it* of him" (Deuteronomy xviii. 17, 18, 19).

After these prophetic words Moses gave up the ghost. The solar Angel, with the flaming sword, who had first appeared to him on Sinai, was awaiting him. He carried him off into the all-embracing arms of celestial Isis, into the waves of that light which is the Spouse of God. Far away from the regions of earth, they passed through circles of souls, of ever-increasing splendour and glory. Finally the Angel of the Lord showed him a spirit of wonderful beauty and celestial gentleness, but arrayed in so dazzling a light that his own radiance was nothing more than a shadow in comparison with it. He carried in his hand not the sword of punishment, but the palm of sacrifice and victory. Moses now saw that this glorious spirit would fulfil his work, and

bring men back to the Father, by the might of the Eternal-Feminine, by Grace divine and perfect Love.

Then the Law-giver bowed down before the Redeemer, and Moses worshipped Jesus Christ.

ORPHEUS

(THE MYSTERIES OF DIONYSOS)

Those innumerable souls, which spring from the great soul of the World, how they roll about and seek one another throughout the mighty universe! They fall from planet to planet, and, in the abyss of space, lament the home they have forgotten. . . . These are thy tears, Dionysos. . . . O Mighty Spirit, Divine Liberator, receive back thy daughters into thy bosom of light!—*Orphic fragment.*

"Eurydice! Thou Divine Light!" said Orpheus, with his last breath. "Eurydice!" moaned the seven chords of his Lyre as they snapped asunder. And his rolling head, unceasingly borne along on the stream of time, still exclaims: "Eurydice! Eurydice!"—*Legend of Orpheus.*

CHAPTER I

PREHISTORIC GREECE—THE BACCHANTES—APPEARANCE OF ORPHEUS

WITHIN the sanctuaries of Apollo, which held to the Orphic tradition, a mysterious fête was celebrated about the time of the spring equinox. It was then that the narcissus burst yearly into flower near the fountain of Castalia. The tripods, the lyres of the temple, gave forth quivering vibrations of their own accord, and the invisible God was regarded as returning from the country of the Hyperboreans on a chariot drawn by swans. Then the high priestess, in the garb of a Muse, and wearing a laurel wreath, her forehead girt with sacred fillets, in the presence of none but initiates, chanted the birth of Orpheus, son of Apollo, and of a priestess of this god. She invoked the soul of Orpheus, father of mystics, melodious saviour of men; sovereign, immortal Orpheus, thrice crowned, in hell, on earth, and in heaven, moving among the constellations and the gods, a star shining on his brow.

The mystic chant of the Delphic priestess alluded to one of the numerous secrets preserved by the priests of Apollo, and unknown to the generality of mankind. Orpheus was the life-giving genius of sacred Greece, the rouser of her divine soul. His seven-stringed lyre embraces the universe. Each chord corresponds to one form of the human soul, contains the law of both a science and an art. We have lost the key to its full harmony, but the divers forms have never ceased vibrating in our ears. The theurgic and dionysiac impulse Orpheus succeeded in communicating to Greece has been passed on by her to the whole of Europe. The present age no longer believes there is any beauty in life. If, in spite of all, the age still retains a profound remembrance, a secret invincible hope of such beauty, it owes it to the sublime inspiration of Orpheus. Let us welcome in him the great initiator of Greece, the Ancestor of Poetry and Music regarded as revealers of Divine Truth.

Before, however, reconstructing the history of Orpheus from the deepest traditions of the sanctuaries, let us say a few words regarding Greece at the time of his appearance.

He was contemporary with Moses, five centuries before Homer, and thirteen centuries before the

Christ. India was plunging into her *Kali-Youg*, her age of darkness, and no longer presented more than the mere shadow of her former splendour. Assyria, which through Babylonian tyranny, had let loose on the world the demon of anarchy, continued to trample on Asia. Egypt, mighty by reason of her Pharaohs, and of the learning of her priests, resisted this universal decomposition with all her might; but her sphere of influence did not extend beyond the Euphrates and the Mediterranean. Israel was about to raise in the wilderness the principle of the male God and divine unity, by the thunder-voice of Moses, but the earth had not yet heard its echoes.

Greece was greatly divided, both as regards her religious and her political life.

The mountainous peninsula, its delicate outlines stretching into the Mediterranean, surrounded by a garland of isles, had been peopled for thousands of years by an offshoot of the white race, a neighbour to the primitive Scythians and Celts. This race had been subjected to the mingled influences of all the previous civilisations. Colonies from India, Egypt, and Phœnicia had swarmed over the banks of the land, peopling its promontories and valleys with various races, customs, and divinities. Mighty fleets passed, with sails un-

furled, beneath the legs of the Colossus of Rhodes, standing on the two moles of its harbour. The sea of the Cyclades, where, in clear weather, the navigator always sees some island or shore appear on the horizon, was furrowed with the ruddy prows of the Phœnicians and the dark vessels of Lydian pirates. Within their hollow ships they carried away the riches of Asia and Africa: ivory, painted pottery, Syrian ware, gold vases, purple, and pearls . . . and often women, abducted from some savage shore.

This mingling of races had given birth to a smooth, harmonious idiom, a mixture of the primitive Celt, of Zend, of Sanscrit, and of Phœnician. This language which depicted the majesty of the ocean under the name of Poseidon, and the serenity of the heavens under that of Ouranos, imitated every voice of nature, from the chirping of birds to the clash of swords and the roar of the tempest. It was multi-coloured, like its intensely blue sea, with ever-changing azure tints; it was of many sounds, like the waves murmuring in its gulfs or roaring over its innumerable cliffs.

Accompanying these merchants or pirates were often priests, their masters, directing or commanding them. In the ship they carefully concealed

a wooden image of some divinity or other. It was doubtless roughly carved, and the sailors of those times had the same fetishism for it as many of our sailors have for their Madonna. None the less, these priests were in possession of certain sciences, and the divinity they carried off from their temple to foreign lands, represented in their mind a conception of nature, a collection of laws, and a civil and religious organisation. In those times the whole intellectual life of a community was born in the sanctuaries. Juno was worshipped at Argos, Artemis in Arcadia; in Paphos and Corinth the Phœnician Astarté had become Aphrodité . . . born of the foam of the sea. Several initiators had appeared in Attica. An Egyptian colony had introduced in Eleusis the worship of Isis under the form of Demeter (Ceres), mother of the gods. Between Mount Hymettus and the Attic heights, ranging between Athens and Marathon, Erechtheus had established the worship of a virgin goddess, daughter of the blue sky, friend of the olive and of wisdom. During the invasions, the population, at the first signal of alarm, took refuge on the Acropolis, clustering around the goddess as they would around a living victory.

Above the local divinities there reigned a few male

and cosmogonic gods. Sequestered, however, on the lofty mountains, and eclipsed by the brilliant cortège of feminine divinities, these had little influence. The Solar God, the Delphic Apollo,[1] already existed, though he still played only a minor rôle. There were priests of Zeus at the foot of Ida's snowy peaks, on the heights of Arcadia, and beneath the oaks of Dodona. The people, however, preferred the goddesses who represented Nature in her seductive or terrible might before the mysterious and universal God. The subterranean streams of Arcadia, the caverns of the mountains, descending to the very bowels of the earth, the volcanic eruptions in the islands of the Ægean Sea, had early inclined the Greeks to the worship of the mysterious forces of the earth. Thus, in her heights, as in her depths, Nature had been sounded, feared, and

[1] According to the ancient tradition of the Thracians, poetry had been invented by *Olen*. Now this name, in Phœnician, means the Universal Being. Apollo has the same root: *Ap Olen*, or *Ap Wholon*, means Universal Father. In primitive ages, the Universal Being was worshipped at Delphi under the name of Olen. The cult of Apollo was introduced by a priestly innovator under the influence of the doctrine of the solar word, which at that time was spreading throughout the sanctuaries of India and Egypt. This reformer identified the Universal Father with his double manifestation, the hyperphysical light and the visible sun. Still, this reform scarcely issued from the depths of the sanctuary. It was Orpheus who gave new power to the solar word of Apollo, infusing into it a new electric life by means of the Mysteries of Dionysos. (See Fabre d'Olivet: *Les vers dorés de Pythagore.*)

venerated. Nevertheless, as all these divinities had neither social centre nor religious synthesis, they waged desperate war against one another. The hostile temples, rival cities, and diverse peoples, divided by rites and ceremonies, as well as by the ambition of priests and kings, impelled by feelings of hatred and envy, engaged in bloody struggles against one another.

Over beyond Greece lay the wild and savage land of Thrace. Away to the north, ranges of mountains, covered with giant oaks and crowned with rocks, followed one another in undulating ridges, spread out like enormous circuses or seemingly entangled together in knotty clusters. The winds from the north lashed their wooded flanks whilst their peaks were often swept by howling tempests. Shepherds in the valleys, and warriors from the plains, alike belonged to this strong white race, the mighty reserve of the Doric element of Greece. A masculine race *par excellence*, whose beauty is testified to in the strongly marked features and decision of character, whilst its ugliness finds expression in the horrible and imposing element noticeable in the masks of the Medusa or the ancient Gorgons.

Like all ancient nations, such as Egypt, Israel and Etruria, which received their organisation from

the Mysteries, Greece had her sacred geography, in which each country became the symbol of a purely intellectual and supraterrestrial region of the mind. Why was Thrace[1] always regarded by the Greeks as the holy country, *par excellence* the country of light, and the veritable home of the Muses? Because these lofty mountains were the sites of the oldest sanctuaries of Kronos, of Zeus, and of Ouranos. Thence had descended in rhythmic harmony all sacred laws, arts, and poetry. Of this the fabled poets of Thrace are a proof. The names of Thamyris, of Linus, and of Amphion correspond,

[1] Thracia, according to Fabre d'Olivet, is derived from the Phœnician Rakhiwa, the ethereal space or firmament. It is certain that the name of Thrace had a symbolical meaning for the poets and initiates of Greece, such as Pindar, Æschylus, or Plato, and signified the land of pure doctrine and of the sacred poetry proceeding therefrom. Accordingly this word had for them a historical and philosophical signification. Philosophically it pointed to an intellectual region, the sum total of the doctrines and traditions which state that the universe proceeds from a divine intelligence. Historically the name recalled the country and race in which the Doric doctrine and poetry, that vigorous offshoot of the ancient Aryan spirit, had first come into being, afterwards, in the sanctuary of Apollo, to spring into full bloom in Greece. The utility of this kind of symbolism is proved by subsequent history. At Delphi, there was a class of *Thracian priests*, guardians of the lofty doctrine. The tribunal of the Amphyctions was, in ancient times, defended by a *Thracian guard*, *i.e.* by a guard of initiate warriors. The tyranny of Sparta suppressed this incorruptible phalanx, replacing it by mercenaries of brute force. Later on, the verb "to thracise" was applied in irony to the devotees of the ancient doctrines.

it may be, to real personages, but they personify, above all, according to the language of the temples, so many kinds of poetry. Each of them consecrates the victory of one theology over another. In the temples of those times, history was only written in allegory. The individual was nothing; the doctrine and the work everything. Thamyris, who sang of the war of the Titans and was struck blind by the Muses, tells of the defeat of cosmogonic poetry by new methods. Linus, who introduced into Greece the melancholy chants of Asia and was slain by Hercules, enables us to trace the invasion into Thrace of emotional poetry, of sad though voluptuous nature, which was at first rejected by the virile mind of the Dorians of the north. At the same time, he notifies the victory of a lunar over a solar cult. On the other hand, Amphion, who, according to allegorical legend, set stones in motion by the magic of his songs, and built temples by the strains of his lyre, represents the plastic force which the solar doctrine and the orthodox Doric poetry exercised over the art of Greece and over the entire Hellenic civilisation.[1]

[1] Strabo positively affirms that ancient poetry was only the language of allegory. Denys of Halicarnassus confirms this, and acknowledges that the mysteries of nature and the sublimest conceptions of morality have been obscured beneath a veil. Accordingly, it is by no means metaphorically that ancient poetry was called *the language of the*

Far different is the light with which Orpheus shines! He beams throughout the ages with the personal ray of creating genius, whose soul in its masculine depths quivers with love for the Eternal-Feminine, response being finally given by this Eternal-Feminine, who lives and palpitates beneath a threefold form in Nature, Humanity, and Heaven. The worship in the sanctuaries, the traditions of the initiates, the voices of poets and philosophers . . . and, more than all else, his work, an organic Greece . . . bear witness to his living reality!

At this time Thrace was engaged in a mighty and desperate struggle. The solar and lunar cults were disputing for supremacy. This war between the worshippers of the sun and of the moon was not, as might be imagined, an idle dispute between two superstitions. These two cults represented two

Gods. This secret and mystical signification, constituting its might and charm, is contained in the very name itself. The majority of linguists have derived the word *poetry* from the Greek verb ποιεῖν, to make, create; an apparently simple and quite natural etymology, though little in conformity with the sacred language of the temples, whence issued primitive poetry. It is more logical to admit, with Fabre d'Olivet, that ποίησις comes from the Phœnician "*phohe*" (mouth, voice, language, speech) and "*ish*" (Superior Being, Principal Being; figuratively, God). The Etrurian Aes or Aesar, the Gallic Aes, the Scandinavian Ase, the Coptic Os (Lord), and the Egyptian Osiris have the same root.

theologies, two cosmogonies, two religions, and two social organisations absolutely opposed to each other. The Ouranian and solar cults had their temples in the lofty and mountainous districts, with men as priests; their laws were very stringent. The lunar cults reigned in the forests and deep valleys, they had women as priestesses, voluptuous rites, an inordinate practice of the occult arts, and a taste for such excitements as orgies present. There was war to the death between the priests of the sun and the priestesses of the moon. It was the struggle of the sexes, ancient and inevitable, open or concealed, between the woman and the man, between the masculine and the feminine principle, filling history with its alternate issues in which the secret of the world's history is worked out. Just as the perfect fusion of the masculine and of the feminine constitute the very essence and mystery of divinity, so the equilibrium of these two principles can alone produce mighty civilisations.

Everywhere in Thrace as in Greece the male deities, both cosmogonic and solar, had been banished to lofty mountains in deserted countries. The people preferred the disquieting cortège of the feminine deities who evoked the dangerous passions and the blind forms of nature. These cults

gave the higher form of divinity to the female sex.

Frightful abuses began to be the result; among the Thracians, the priestesses of the moon or of the threefold Hecate had proved their supremacy by appropriating the ancient worship of Bacchus and giving it a bloody and formidable character. In token of their victory they had assumed the name of Bacchantes, as though to testify to their supremacy, to the sovereign reign of woman, and her rule over man.

Magicians, seducers, and blood-stained sacrificers of human victims in turn, they had their sanctuaries in wild out-of-the-way valleys. By what sombre charm and ardent curiosity were men and women attracted into these solitary wilds, full of luxurious overflowing vegetation? Naked forms . . . lascivious dances in the depths of the woods . . . laughs and loud shrieks . . . and a hundred Bacchantes flung themselves on the stranger, hurling him to the ground. He was forced either to swear submission to themselves and to their rites, or to perish. The Bacchantes tamed panthers and lions, making them take part in their fêtes. When night came, their arms encircled with serpents, they flung themselves down before the threefold Hecate, then, with frantic dances,

they summoned Bacchus from beneath the earth, the bull-faced Bacchus, of double sex.[1] Woe to the stranger, woe to the priest of Jupiter or of Apollo, who played the spy on them. Such a one was immediately torn to pieces.

The primitive Bacchantes were accordingly the Druidesses of Greece. Many Thracian chiefs remained faithful to the old male cults. The Bacchantes, however, had insinuated themselves into the good graces of some of their kings, whose barbarian customs had been refined by Asiatic luxury. These had been seduced by voluptuousness and tamed by terror. In this way, the Gods had divided Thrace into two hostile camps. The priests of Jupiter and Apollo on their deserted mountain-tops were becoming powerless against Hecate, whose might was extending in the burning valleys, and who, from her depths, was beginning to threaten the altars of the sons of light.

[1] The bull-faced Bacchus is mentioned in the 29th Orphic hymn. This is a souvenir of an ancient cult which bears no reference to the pure tradition of Orpheus. The latter completely refined and transfigured the popular Bacchus into the celestial Dionysos, symbol of the divine spirit evolving through all the reigns of nature. Strange to relate, we find the infernal Bacchus of the Bacchantes in the bull-faced Satan evoked and worshipped by the witches of the Middle Ages in their nightly revels. This is the famous Baphomet, votaries of whom, in order to bring them into discredit, the Templars were accused of being.

About this time there had appeared in Thrace a young man of royal descent and wonderfully seductive personality. He was said to be the son of a priestess of Apollo ; his melodious voice possessed a strange charm. He spoke of the Gods in new unheard-of strains, and seemed to be inspired. His auburn locks, the pride of the Doric race, fell in golden curls over his shoulders, and the music which flowed from his lips gave the corners of his mouth a gentle though sorrowful contour, whilst his deep blue eyes beamed forth tenderness and magic power. The wild Thracians fled from his glance, but women skilled in the art of charms said that the azure philtre of his eyes mingled the darts of the sun with the soft caresses of the moon. The very Bacchantes, attracted by his beauty, often prowled near him, like amorous panthers proud of their spotted skins, smiling at his words though they did not understand them.

Suddenly, this young man, who was called the *son of Apollo,* had disappeared. He was said to be dead, to have descended to the infernal regions ; but he had secretly escaped to Samothrace, and thence to Egypt, where he had asked for shelter from the priests of Memphis. After having accomplished their Mysteries, he had returned, twenty years later, under an initiate-name which he had obtained after

having passed his tests, receiving it from his masters as a sign of his mission. He was now called *Orpheus* or *Arpha*.[1]

The oldest sanctuary of Jupiter was at that time being established on Mount Kaoukaion. In former times its hierophants had been great pontiffs. From the summit of this mountain, sheltered from all acts of violence, they had reigned over the whole of Thrace. Since, however, the lower divinities had gained the upper hand, their adherents were few and their temples almost abandoned. The priests of Mount Kaoukaion welcomed the initiate from Egypt as a saviour. The science and enthusiasm of Orpheus won over the greater part of the Thracians, completely transformed the worship of Bacchus, and tamed the Bacchantes. Very soon his influence made itself felt in all the sanctuaries of Greece. It was he who established the rule of Zeus over Thrace, and that of Apollo over Delphi, where he laid the foundations of the tribunal of the Amphyctions, which became the social unity of Greece. Finally, by the creation of the Mysteries, he formed the religious soul of his country, for, from the height of initiation, he founded the religion of Zeus along with that of

[1] A Phœnician word composed of "*aour*," light, and "*rophae*," healing—he who heals by light.

Dionysos, enfolding both in one universal idea. The initiates received by means of his instruction the pure light of sublime truths, and this very light filtered down to the people in a more temperate though none the less beneficent form under the veil of poetry and enchanting fêtes.

It was in this way that Orpheus had become pontiff of Thrace, high priest of the Olympian Zeus, and the revealer of the heavenly Dionysos to the initiates.

CHAPTER II

THE TEMPLE OF JUPITER

MOUNT KAOUKAION rises near the source of the Ebro. It is girdled by a chain of mighty oaks and crowned by a circle of rocks and cyclopean stones. For thousands of years this mountain had been a holy place. The Pelasgians and the Celts, the Scythians and the Getae, had driven one another from the spot and had come in turn to worship their divers Gods. When man mounts so high, is it not always the same God he seeks? If not, why with so much pain and trouble should he build for Him a dwelling high up in the winds and clouds of heaven?

A temple dedicated to Jupiter now rises in the centre of the sacred spot, mighty and impregnable as a fortress. At the entrance stands a peristyle of four Doric columns, its enormous shaft clearly outlined against a dull-looking portico.

In the zenith the sky is clear, though the tempest is still howling over the mountains of

Thrace, the valleys and peaks of which stretch out in the distance; a storm-tossed pitchy ocean, lit up by flashes of lightning.

It is the hour for sacrifice; the only sacrifice performed by the priests of Kaoukaion is that by fire. They descend the temple steps and kindle the offering of sweet-smelling wood with a torch from the sanctuary. Finally, the pontiff leaves the temple. Clad in white linen, like the rest, a wreath of cyprus and myrtle is placed on his head. In his hand he holds an ebony ivory-handled sceptre, whilst around his waist is a golden girdle, on which crystals cast gloomy flashes of light, symbols of mysterious rule. This is Orpheus.

By the hand he leads a disciple, a child of Delphi, who, pale and trembling, listens to the words of the mighty initiate with enraptured mysterious thrill. Orpheus, bent on reassuring the mystic, chosen one, gently places his arms round the disciple's shoulders. A smile is in his eyes; then of a sudden, a flash of light shines forth from their depths. As the priests at their feet turn round the altar and chant the hymn of fire, Orpheus solemnly speaks to the beloved mystic words of initiation, which fall like heavenly dew deep into his heart.

Hear now the winged words of Orpheus to the young disciple:

"Turn thy thoughts within, that thou mayest rise to the first principle of all things, to the mighty Triad blazing in immaculate Ether. Burn up thy body in the fire of thy thought, detach thyself from matter, as does the flame from the wood it consumes. Then thy spirit shall rise into the pure ether of eternal Causes, as the eagle ascends to the throne of Jupiter.

"I will now reveal to thee the secrets of the worlds, the soul of Nature, the essence of God. First of all, listen to the great Secret. One being alone reigns in lofty heaven as in the abyss of earth, the thunder-rolling, ethereal Zeus. His attributes are: deep counsel, powerful hate, and delightful love. He reigns in the depths of earth and in the heights of the starry sky. Breath of all things, fire untamed, male and female, a King, a Power, a God, a great Master.

"Jupiter is the divine Bridegroom and Bride, Man and Woman, Father and Mother. From their sacred marriage, from their never-ending nuptials, incessantly issue Fire and Water, Earth and Ether, Night and Day, the haughty Titans, the unchanging Gods, and the floating seed of men.

"The loves of Heaven and Earth are not known to the profane. The mysteries of the Bridegroom and the Bride are unveiled only to divine men. Just now these rocks were shaken by thunder, the lightning flash fell like a living fire, a rolling flame, and the mountain echoes responded joyfully. But thou didst quake with fear, knowing neither whence comes this fire, nor where it strikes. It is the male creative fire, the seed of Zeus. It springs from the heart and brain of Jupiter, and enters into all beings. When the thunderbolt falls, it flashes forth from his right hand. We, however, his priests, know its essence, we avoid and at times direct the shafts.

"And now, behold the firmament. Regard this brilliant circle of constellations over which is flung the thin veil of the Milky Way, the dust of suns and worlds. See how Orion flashes in beauty, how the Heavenly Twins and the Lyre beam forth. This is the body of the divine Bride turning round in harmonious motion, in unison with the Bridegroom's songs. Look with the eyes of the spirit, and thou shalt see her head thrown back, and her arms extended; thou shalt raise her star-decked veil.

"Jupiter is the divine Bridegroom and Bride. This is the first mystery.

"And now, child of Delphi, prepare for the second initiation. Thrill and weep, enjoy and worship! Thy spirit is about to plunge into the burning zone where the mighty Demiurgus is mingling the soul and the world in the cup of life. After tasting this intoxicating beverage, all beings forget their divine life and descend into the painful abyss of incarnation.

"Zeus is the mighty Demiurgus. Dionysos is his son, his manifested word. Dionysos, glorious spirit, living intelligence, was the splendour of his father's dwelling. One day as he was bending forward, contemplating the abyss of heaven and its constellations, he saw reflected in the azure depths his own image with outstretched arms. Enamoured of this beautiful phantom, his own double, he plunged forward to grasp it. But the image ever escaped him, drawing him down to the depths of the abyss. Finally he found himself in a shady sweet-smelling valley, in full enjoyment of the voluptuous breezes which gently caressed his body. Deep in a grotto he perceived Persephône. Maïa, the beautiful weaver, was weaving a veil over whose surface could be seen floating the images of all beings. Mute with ravished delight, he stood there before the divine virgin. At this moment, the proud Titans

and the free Titanides saw him. The former jealous of his beauty, and the latter impelled by a mad passion, flung themselves on him like the raging elements, and tore him to pieces. After sharing out his limbs they boiled them in water; his heart they buried. The thunderbolts of Jupiter destroyed the Titans, and Minerva carried away into the Ether the heart of Dionysos; there it became a shining sun. From the smoke of his body have sprung forth the souls of men ascending again to heaven. When the pale shades have again united into one whole the burning heart of the God, they will arise like flames, and Dionysos in his entirety will spring into ever-renewed life in the heights of the Empyreum.

"This is the mystery of the death of Dionysos; now listen to that of his resurrection. Men are the flesh and blood of Dionysos; the unhappy are his scattered members, seeking to be reunited by mutual torture in crime and hatred during thousands of existences. The fiery heat of the earth, the abyss of the forces below, ever draws them deeper and deeper into the abyss, tearing and torturing them more and more. But we, initiates, we who know what is above and below, are the saviours of souls, the Hermes of men. Like magnets we attract them to us, ourselves being

attracted by the Gods. Thus, by celestial incantations, we reconstitute the living body of the divinity. We cause the heavens to weep and the earth to rejoice; like precious jewels we bear in our hearts the tears of all beings to change them into smiles. In us God dies; in us, also, he returns to birth."

Thus spoke Orpheus. The disciple of Delphi knelt down before his master, with arms raised in the gesture of a suppliant. The pontiff of Jupiter laid his hand on the young man's head as he pronounced the following words of consecration:

"May ineffable Zeus, may Dionysos who thrice reveals himself, in hell, on earth, and in heaven, be propitious to thy youth, and pour into thine head the knowledge of the Gods!"

Then the initiate, leaving the peristyle of the temple, threw storax into the altar fire, and thrice invoked thunder-compelling Zeus. The priests, chanting a hymn, wheeled around in circles. The king-pontiff had remained, absorbed in thought, under the portico, his arm resting on a monolith. The disciple returned to him—

"Melodious Orpheus!" he said; "thou child beloved of the immortals, and gentle healer of souls, ever since I heard thee sing hymns to the

Gods at the fête of the Delphic Apollo, thou hast taken possession of my heart, and I will follow thee wheresoever thou goest. Thy songs are like intoxicating wine, thy teachings like a bitter drink which relieves the tired body and gives renewed strength to the limbs."

"The path which leads from here to the Gods is difficult," said Orpheus, who seemed rather to be replying to inner voices than to his disciple. "A flowery path, a steep ascent, and then rocks shaken by thunderbolts, with the immensity of space all around. Such is the destiny of the Seer and the Prophet on earth. My child, remain in the flowery paths of the plain; do not seek anything beyond."

"My thirst increases in proportion as thou quenchest it," said the young initiate. "Thou hast told me of the essence of the Gods. Great master of mysteries, inspired by divine Eros, shall I ever *see them?*"

"With the eyes of the spirit," said the pontiff of Jupiter, "not with those of the body. Only with the latter canst thou see now. A lengthy preparation, the endurance of great pain, is needed to open the eyes of the soul."

"Thou alone canst open them, Orpheus! With thee by my side, what have I to fear?"

"Dost thou desire this power? Then listen! In Thessaly, by the enchanted vale of Tempe, rises a mystic temple, closed against the profane. There Dionysos manifests himself to mystics and seers. In one year from now, I invite thee to this fête, when, plunging thee into a magic sleep, I will open thine eyes on the heavenly world. Let thy life until then be chaste and thy soul pure. For thou must know that the light of the Gods terrifies the weak and slays the profane. Come into my dwelling, and I will give thee the book necessary for thy preparation."

The master returned with the Delphic disciple within the temple, leading him into the large reserved cella. There stood burning an Egyptian lamp which was never extinguished, held by a winged genius, and wrought in forged metal. Numerous rolls of papyrus covered with Egyptian hieroglyphs and Phœnician characters were enclosed in boxes of sweet-smelling cedar-wood, as well as books written in the Greek language by Orpheus, and containing his secret science and doctrine.[1]

[1] Among the numerous lost books which the Orphic writers of Greece attributed to Orpheus were *The Argonautics*, dealing with the mighty Hermetic work; a *Demetriad*, a poem on the mother of the Gods, to which corresponded a *Cosmogony*; *The Sacred Songs of Bacchus*, or *The Pure Spirit*, which had a *Theogony* as their comple-

The master and disciple conversed together in the cella for a portion of the night.

ment, without mentioning other works such as *The Veil* or *The Net of Souls*, the art of mysteries and rites; *The Book of Mutations*, chemistry and alchemy; *The Corybantes*, or terrestrial mysteries and earthquakes; *Anemoscopy*, science of the atmosphere, natural and magical botany, &c.

CHAPTER III

DIONYSIAC FÊTE IN THE VALLEY OF TEMPE[1]

IT was in Thessaly, in the cool and fragrant valley of Tempe. The holy night which Orpheus had consecrated to the mysteries of Dionysos had come. Conducted by one of the servants of the temple, the disciple of Delphi proceeded along a narrow, deep gorge, on either side of which rose cliffs with towering peaks. Throughout the dark night nothing could be heard save the murmur of the stream flowing between its verdant banks. Finally, the full moon appeared from behind a mountain, its yellow disc shining out above the

[1] Pausanias relates that a procession was instituted every year from Delphi to the vale of Tempe, to gather the sacred laurel. This significant custom reminded the disciples of Apollo that they were connected with the Orphic initiation, and that the first inspiration of Orpheus was the antique and vigorous trunk whose ever-young and living branches were gathered by the temple of Delphi. This fusion of the Apollonian and the Orphic tradition is also shown in another manner in the history of the temple. In fact, the well-known dispute between Apollo and Bacchus for the tripod of the temple has no other meaning. Bacchus, the legend says, ceded the tripod to his brother, and withdrew to Mount Parnassus. This means that Dionysos and the Orphic initiation remained the privilege of the initiates, whilst Apollo gave his oracles to the outside world.

sombre rocks. Its subtle magnetic light dissolved the darkness, and suddenly the enchanted valley showed forth in the glory of Elysian light. For a moment there could be seen its turf-covered ground, its groves of ash and poplar trees, its crystal springs, ivy-covered grottoes, and its winding stream enlacing its woody isles. A light vapour seemed to envelop the plants in voluptuous sleep. The bright surface of the fountains seemed ruffled with the sighs of nymphs, whilst vague flute-music escaped from the motionless reeds. Over all hovered the silent incantation of Diana.

The disciple of Delphi proceeded on his way as though in a dream. At times he would halt and breathe in a delightful odour of honeysuckle and laurel. But the magic light appeared for only a moment, then a cloud overshadowed the moon. Darkness covered all, the rocks resumed their threatening aspect, lights flashed on every side under the thickly foliaged trees, by the bank of the stream and in the depths of the valley.

"These are the mystics," said the aged guide of the temple, "they are starting on their march. Each procession has a torch-bearer as guide. We will follow them."

The travellers met choirs issuing from the groves and proceeding along the paths. First they saw

pass by *the mystics of the youthful Bacchus*, youths clad in long tunics of fine linen and crowned with ivy. They carried goblets of carved wood, symbols of the cup of life. Then came young men, proud and strong; these were called *the mystics of Hercules the wrestler*. Their characteristics were: short tunics, bare legs, lion's skin across tunics and loins, heads crowned with wreaths of olive. Afterwards followed the inspired ones, *the mystics of the limb-dispersed Bacchus*, with striped panther skin around the body, thyrsus in hand, and hair tressed with purple fillets.

Passing near a cavern, they saw *the mystics of Aïdoneus and subterranean Eros*, lying prostrate on the ground. These were men mourning for dead relatives and friends. In low accents they chanted: "Aïdoneus! Aïdoneus! Give back to us those thou hast taken away, or else grant that we may descend into thy kingdom." The wind moaned in the cavern and seemed mingled with funereal jeers and death sobs. Of a sudden, a mystic turned towards the disciple of Delphi and said to him: "Thou hast crossed the threshold of Aïdoneus, never more shalt thou behold the light of the living." Another passed close by him whispering in his ear: "Shade, thou shalt be the prey of the shadow; thou who hast come from Night, return to

Erebus!" Then he ran hurriedly away. The disciple of Delphi was horror-struck. He whispered to his guide: "What does this mean?" The servant of the temple seemed to have heard nothing, and merely replied: "We must cross the bridge, no one can escape the goal."

They crossed a wooden bridge thrown over the Peneus.

"Where do those plaintive voices and that doleful chant come from?" asked the neophyte. "What are those white shadows walking in long files under the poplars there?"

"They are women on the way to be initiated into the mysteries of Dionysos."

"Do you know their names?"

"Here no one's name is known, every one forgets his own. Just as, at the entrance of the consecrated domain, the mystics leave behind their polluted garments, to bathe in the stream and clothe themselves afresh in pure linen robes, so each of them abandons his name and takes another. For seven nights and seven days they are transformed, they pass into another life. Look at all these processions of women. They are not grouped together according to their families or countries, but according to the God who inspires them."

They saw pass before them winding streams of

maidens crowned with narcissus and clad in azure peplums; these the guide called *Persephone's companion nymphs.* Chaste and modest, they carried small chests, urns, and votive vases in their arms. Then, dressed in red peplums, followed *the mystic lovers, the ardent brides and seekers of Aphrodite;* these disappeared in the depths of a wood, whence could be heard issuing violent cries mingled with languishing sobs. These gradually faded away. Then a passionate choir of voices came from the dark myrtle grove, rising to heaven in slow quivering throbs: "Eros! Thou hast given us pain! Aphrodite! Thou hast broken our limbs! We have covered our breasts with the skin of the fawn, but within our hearts we bear the bleeding purple wounds. Our hearts are devouring fires. Others die of poverty; it is love which is slaying us. Devour us, Eros! Eros! or else, deliver us, O Dionysos!"

Another procession approached. These were women completely clad in black wool with long trailing veils, all afflicted by some great grief. The guide named them *the weeping matrons of Persephone.* Here stood a mighty marble mausoleum. Around it they all knelt, and with loud shrieks began to unbind their tresses. To the strophe of desire they replied by the antistrophe of grief.

"Persephone!" they said, "thou art dead, carried off by Aïdoneus; thou hast descended into the kingdom of the dead. We, however, who moan for our beloved, are both living and dead. May the day never more appear for us! May the earth which covers thee, O Mighty Goddess, give us eternal sleep, and may my shade rove about, one with that of the beloved! Here us, Persephone! Persephone!"

In the presence of these strange scenes, and beneath the contagious delirium of such profound grief, the disciple of Delphi felt harassed by innumerable torturing sensations. He was no longer himself. The thoughts, desires, and pains of all these beings had become his own. His soul was portioned out over a thousand bodies, he was filled with mortal anguish. No longer knew he whether he was a man or a shade.

Then an initiate of lofty form, who was passing along, halted, and said:

"Peace be to suffering shades! Look upwards, women, to the light of Dionysos, Orpheus awaits you!"

They all clustered around him in silence, plucking off the leaves from their asphodel wreaths, and with his thyrsus he showed them the way. The women turned aside to drink at a fountain

from wooden cups. Then the processions formed again and the cortège was continued, young maidens in front singing the following dirge: "Wave the poppies! Drink Lethe's stream! Give us the flower we long for, and grant that the narcissus may bloom anew for our sisters! Persephone! Persephone!"

The disciple proceeded a considerable distance farther with his guide, crossing meadows filled with daffodils. As they advanced beneath the shades of the gently-soughing poplars he heard mournful chants in the air; whence they came he knew not. He saw horrible masks and small wax figures hanging from the branches, like babes in swaddling clothes. Here and there small barques crossed the stream bearing passengers as peaceful and silent as the dead. Finally the valley extended its borders, lofty mountain peaks pierced the clear sky, and dawn appeared. Away in the distance could be seen the gloomy gorges of Ossa, with its deep-cut abysses and heaped-up crumbling rocks. Nearer, in the midst of a belt of mountains, the temple of Dionysos shone out on the summit of a tree-clad hill.

The sun was now gilding the lofty peaks with its new glory. As they approached the temple they saw processions of mystics and women and

groups of initiates arriving from every direction. This mass of human beings, to all appearance grave and self-possessed, though inwardly stirred to its depths, met at the foot of the hill and scaled the approaches of the sanctuary. Waving branches and thyrsi, they greeted one another as friends. The guide had disappeared, and the disciple of Delphi found himself, he knew not how, amid a group of initiates with shining hair, intertwined with wreaths and fillets of divers colours. Though he had never seen them, some blest memory caused him to believe that he recognised them. They too seemed to be awaiting him. They bowed to him as to a brother, congratulating him on his fortunate arrival. Carried off by his group, and as though borne aloft on wings, he mounted to the six highest steps of the temple, when a flash of blinding light burst upon his eyes. It was the rising sun casting his first dart into the valley, and inundating with his dazzling rays these mystics and initiates grouped on the temple stairs and about the hill.

Immediately a choir of voices chanted forth a pæan. The bronze gates of the temple opened of themselves, and Orpheus, prophet and hierophant, appeared, followed by the Hermes and the torch-bearer. A thrill of joy ran through the

disciple of Delphi on recognising him. Clad in purple, a lyre of ivory and gold in his hand, Orpheus, in the beauty of eternal youth, said :

" Hail to you who have come to be born again after the trials of earth, you who are now passing through the new birth. Come, you mystics, you women and initiates who are issuing from the gloom of night, come and drink in the light of the temple. Rejoice, you who have suffered ; and rest, you weary strugglers. The sun I call down upon your heads, and which will soon shine in your souls, is not the sun of mortals ; it is the unsullied light of Dionysos, the glorious sun of the initiates. You shall overcome by your past sufferings, by the effort which has brought you here ; if you believe in the divine word, you have already overcome. For after the long cycle of lives wrapt in darkness, you shall finally issue from the painful round of births, and shall all find yourselves again as one body, one soul, in the light of Dionysos !

" The divine spark which guides us on earth is within us ; it becomes a flame in the temple, a star in the sky. Thus grows the light of Truth ! Listen to the vibrations of the seven-stringed lyre, the lyre of the God. . . . It moves the worlds. Listen ! . . . Let its sound flow into your souls . . .

and the very heavens shall be opened unto you!

"Help for the weak, consolation for the suffering, hope for all! Woe to the wicked and profane, they shall be confounded. For in the ecstasy of the Mysteries each one sees into the depths of the other's soul; there the wicked are filled with terror and the profane are slain.

"And now that Dionysos has shone on you, I invoke all-powerful and heavenly Eros. May he be in your loves, your sorrows, and your joys. Love, for everything loves, Demons of the Abyss and Gods of the Ether alike. Love, for all creation loves. Love light, not darkness. During your journey remember the goal. When the souls return to light they bear on their sidereal body all the faults of their lives, like hideous stains. . . . To efface them, they must offer expiation and return to earth. . . . But the pure and strong enter the sun of Dionysos.

"And now chant the Evohé!"

"Evohé!" shouted the heralds at the four corners of the temple. "Evohé!" the cymbals resounded. "Evohé!" replied the enthusiastic crowd grouped on the steps of the sanctuary. The cry of Dionysos, the sacred summons to rebirth and life, rolled along the valley, repeated

by a thousand voices, and sent back by all the echoes of the mountains. And the shepherds guarding their flocks along the wild gorges of Ossa replied, "Evohé!"[1]

[1] The exclamation Evohé, pronounced *Hê: Vau: Hê*, was the sacred cry of all the initiates of Egypt, Judæa, Phœnicia, Asia Minor, and Greece. The four sacred letters, pronounced as follows: *Iod: Hê: Vau: Hê*, represented God in His eternal fusion with Nature, they embraced the totality of the Being, the living Universe. *Iod* (Osiris) signified the divinity properly called, the creative intellect, the *Eternal-Masculine*, who is in all, everywhere and above all. *Hê: Vau: Hê* represented the *Eternal-Feminine*, Eve, Isis, Nature, under every form visible and invisible, fecundated by him. The highest initiation, that of the theogonic sciences and the theurgic arts, corresponded to the letter *Jod*. Another order of sciences corresponded to each of the letters of Eve. Like Moses, Orpheus reserved the sciences corresponding to the letter *Jod* (Jove, Zeus, Jupiter), along with the idea of the unity of God, to the initiates of the first degree, and even sought to interest the people in them by means of poetry, the arts, and their living symbols. This is why the cry Evohé was openly proclaimed at the fêtes of Dionysos, to which were admitted, in addition to the initiates, the simple candidates for the Mysteries.

In this appears to be the entire difference between the work of Moses and that of Orpheus. Both start from Egyptian initiation, and are in possession of the same truth, though they apply it in opposite significations. Moses glorifies the Father, the male God, with the utmost severity and jealousy. He entrusts his charge to a restricted priesthood, and subjects the people to an implacable discipline, devoid of revelation. Orpheus, divinely attracted by the Eternal-Feminine, by Nature, glorifies it in the name of God, who penetrates it, and whom he wishes to cause to shine forth over a divine humanity. This is the reason the cry of Evohé became the sacred cry *par excellence* in all the mysteries of Greece.

CHAPTER IV

EVOCATION

THE fête had vanished like a dream; night had fallen. Dances, songs, and prayers had disappeared in a roseate mist. Orpheus and his disciple descended along a subterranean passage into a sacred crypt, which penetrated into the very heart of the mountain, and to which the hierophant alone had access. Here, the divinely inspired one gave himself up to meditation in utter solitude, or, aided by his adepts, followed out mighty works of magic and theurgy.

All around lay a vast cavernous space. A couple of torches, planted in the ground, dimly lit up its mirky depths and its walls filled with crevices. A few steps away there appeared in the ground a dark yawning cleft, from which issued a warm wind; this abyss seemed to descend to the very bowels of the earth. A small altar, on which a fire of dry laurel was burning, and a porphyry sphinx guarded the entrance. Far in the distance, at an immeasurable height, the cavern opened out

on to a sky, broken by an oblique fissure. This pale ray of bluish light seemed to be the very eye of the firmament plunging into the abyss.

"Thou hast drunk of the fountain of divine light," said Orpheus. "With undefiled heart hast thou penetrated into the inmost mysteries. The solemn hour has come for me to bring thee to the very fountain of life and light. Those who have not removed the dense veil which conceals invisible wonders from men's eyes have not become sons of the Gods.

"Listen now to truths which must not be told the mass of mortals, truths which give might to the sanctuaries.

"*God* is one and eternally unchangeable. He reigns over all. *The Gods* are diverse and innumerable, for divinity is eternal and infinite. The greatest are the souls of the constellations. Each constellation has its own suns and stars, earths and moons, and all issue from the celestial fire of Zeus, from the initial light. Half-conscious, inaccessible, and unchangeable, they govern the mighty whole by their unvarying movements. Each revolving constellation draws along in its ethereal sphere phalanxes of demi-gods or radiant souls who were formerly human, and who, after

descending the scale of kingdoms, have gloriously ascended the cycles, and finally issued from the round of generations. It is through these divine spirits that God breathes, acts, and manifests Himself; or, rather, these form the breath of His living soul, the rays of His eternal consciousness. They rule over armies of lower spirits which govern the elements; they control the universe. Far and near, they surround us, and, although of immortal essence, they assume ever-changing forms, according to nation, epoch, or region. The impious man who denies their existence still dreads them; the pious man worships without knowing them; the initiate knows, attracts, and sees them. I struggled to find them, braved death, and, as is said, descended into hell to tame the demons of the abyss, to summon the gods from on high to my beloved Greece, that lofty heaven might unite with earth listening with delight to strains divine. Celestial beauty will become incarnate in the flesh of women, the fire of Zeus will run in the blood of heroes, and long before mounting to the constellations the sons of the Gods will shine forth like Immortals.

"Knowest thou what the Lyre of Orpheus is? The sound of inspired temples whose chords are the Gods. Greece will become attuned to their

music like a lyre, and the very marble will sing in brilliant cadence and celestial harmony.

"Now I will evoke my Gods, that they may appear living to thee; I will show thee in vision prophetic the mystic nuptials I am preparing for the world, a marriage that initiates will behold.

"Recline beneath the shelter of this rock, and fear not. A magic sleep will close thine eyelids; at first thou wilt tremble and see awful visions, but afterwards, a delightful glory, a feeling of happiness hitherto unknown, will drown thy senses and thine entire being."

The disciple cowered down into the niche which had been hollowed out in the rock in the form of a couch. Orpheus cast a few perfumes on the altar fire. Then, taking up his ebony sceptre, the top of which shone in flaming crystal, he stood close to the sphynx, and, in loud tones, began the invocation:

"Cybele! Cybele! Mighty mother, hear me! Primitive light, nimble and ethereal flame ever bounding through space and enfolding the echoes and images of all things, I summon thy thunderous chargers of light! O Universal Soul, who spreadest thyself over the vastnesses of space, and sowest suns in the firmament, leaving thy starry mantle, sweep through the ether, piercing through

hidden light invisible to eyes of flesh! Great mother of Worlds and Gods, containing in thine essence the eternal types! ancient Cybele, hear me! By my magic sceptre, by my compact with the Powers, by the soul of Eurydice! . . . I summon thee forth, a multiform, docile Bride, quivering beneath the fire of the eternal Male. From the loftiest heights and deepest depths, from every point in space, flow in and fill this cavern with thy effluvia; surround the son of the Mysteries with a diamond rampart; grant that he may behold in thy mighty bosom the Spirits of the Abyss, of Earth, and of Heaven."

At these words, a subterranean thunder-clap shook the pit to its depths, the whole mountain quaked. A cold perspiration covered the disciple's body. He saw Orpheus only through an ever-thickening mist. For a moment he tried to struggle against a mighty, overmastering power, but his brain was rendered powerless, his will ineffectual. He experienced the terror of a drowning man, gulping down the deadly water, and whose horrible convulsions close in the darkness of unconsciousness.

On returning to his senses, night was all around him, broken by a mirky, yellowish twilight. Long he gazed without seeing anything. From time to time he felt his skin gently grazed as though by

invisible bats. Finally, he imagined he saw monstrous forms of centaurs, hydras, and gorgons move about in the darkness. The first object he saw distinctly, however, was a tall female figure sitting on a throne. She was enveloped in a long veil, with broad funereal folds strewn with pallid stars, and wore a wreath of poppies. Her immovable eyes kept continual watch. Masses of human shades like tired birds moved about her murmuring softly: "Queen of the dead, soul of the earth, O Persephone! We are the daughters of heaven. Wherefore are we exiled to this gloomy kingdom? Thou heavenly reaper, wherefore hast thou garnered in our souls which before flew about, happy in the light, amidst their sisters throughout the fields of ether?"

Persephone replied:

"I have plucked the narcissus, and entered the bridal bed. I have drunk death along with life, and, like you, am now groaning in darkness."

"When shall we be liberated?" groaned the souls.

"When my heavenly spouse, the divine deliverer, comes," replied Persephone.

Then a horde of terrible women appeared, with bloodshot eyes, and heads crowned with poisonous plants. Around their arms and semi-nude sides

twined serpents which they handled as whips. "Souls, spectres, larvæ!" they hissed, "believe not the insensate queen of the dead. We are the priestesses of the infernal regions, servants of the elements and monsters below; Bacchantes on earth, Furies in Tartarus. Unhappy souls, it is we who are your everlasting queens. You shall never leave the cursed circle of generations, we will drive you back with our scorpions. Be tortured eternally in the hissing embrace of our reptiles, in the folds of desire, of hatred, and remorse."

Thus speaking, with dishevelled hair, they flung themselves on the band of tortured souls, which began, with long painful groans, to writhe in the air beneath their lashes, like a whirlwind of dry leaves.

At this sight, Persephone grew pallid; she resembled a lunar phantom. She murmured: "Heaven! . . . Light! . . . The Gods! . . . a dream! . . . Sleep, eternal sleep!" Her crown of poppies faded away, and her eyes were closed in anguish. The queen of the dead fell on her throne in a state of lethargy . . . then everything disappeared in darkness.

The vision changed. The disciple of Delphi saw himself in a beautiful verdant valley, with Mount

Olympus in the distance. Before a dark cavern the beautiful Persephone was sleeping on a bed of flowers. A narcissus wreath replaced the crown of poppies, and the dawn of a new-born life spread an ambrosian tint over her cheeks. Her coal-black tresses fell on shoulders of dazzling whiteness, whilst her bosom, as it gently rose and fell, seemed to invite the embrace of the wind. Nymphs were dancing on the plain; small white clouds fleeting through the azure vault. Within a temple, the strains of a lyre could be heard.

In its golden strings and sacred harmony the disciple heard a universal music. From leaves and waves and caverns issued a tender incorporeal melody; the distant voices of women initiates singing their choruses in the mountains, reached his ear in broken cadences. Some of them, in despair, were calling on the God, the rest, half-dead with fatigue, as they fell on the outskirts of the forest, imagined they dimly perceived him.

Finally, in the zenith above, the glorious vault of azure opened, and from its bosom came forth a brilliant cloud. Like a bird hovering for a moment in the air, then descending to earth, the God who holds the thyrsus appeared before Persephone. He shone in glory with loosened locks, within his eyes rolled the sacred delirium of worlds yet to be born.

Long he gazed on her, then over her form he extended his thyrsus, which gently grazed her bosom, whereupon she began to smile. He touched her brow, she opened her eyes, slowly rose from her recumbent position, and fixed her gaze on her spouse. Those eyes, still drowned in the slumber of Erebus, began to shine like twin stars. "Dost thou recognise me?" said the God. "O Dionysos!" said Persephone, "Divine Spirit, Word of Jupiter, Celestial Light glowing in human form! Each time thou awakest me anew, I seem to live for the first time; worlds once more spring into being in my memory; both past and future become the immortal present, and I feel the whole universe glow within my heart!"

At the same time, above the mountains, the Gods appeared in silver-edged clouds, bending curiously towards the earth.

Down below, groups of men, women, and children, issuing from the vales and caverns, were gazing at the Immortals in celestial ecstasy. Glowing hymns of praise and clouds of incense arose from the temple. Between heaven and earth one of those nuptials which enable mothers to conceive heroes and Gods was being consummated. A ruddy glow had already spread over the whole scenery, and the queen of the dead, once more the

divine reaper, mounted to heaven, borne away in the arms of her spouse. A purple-tinted cloud surrounded them, and the lips of Dionysos touched the mouth of Persephone. . . . Thereupon a mighty cry of love arose from heaven and earth, as though the sacred whirl of emotion felt by the Gods as it passed over the great lyre were bent on tearing all its chords to pieces and scattering its music to the winds. At the same moment there flashed forth from the divine couple a very tornado of blinding light. . . . Then everything disappeared.

For a moment the disciple of Orpheus felt as though engulfed in the source of all that lives, immersed in the Sun of Being. Plunging into the incandescent brazier, he shot forth again with heavenly pinions, and like a lightning flash sped through the worlds to enter into the ecstatic sleep of the Infinite, once he had reached their limits.

On regaining his bodily senses, he found himself plunged in black night. Nothing but a luminous lyre broke the awful darkness. It fled away ever farther and farther and finally became a star. Then the disciple saw that he was in the crypt of the evocations, and that this luminous spot was the distant cleft in the cavern, opening out on the firmament.

A great shadowy form was standing by his side.

He recognised Orpheus by his long wavy locks and the flashing crystal of his sceptre.

"Child of Delphi, whence comest thou?" said the hierophant.

"Master of the initiates, divine enchanter, marvellous Orpheus, I have dreamed a divine dream. Can it be a charm of magic, a gift of the Gods? What can have happened? Has the world changed? Where am I now?"

"Thou hast gained the crown of initiation and hast lived my dream, immortal Greece! Now let us leave this spot, for I must die and thou live, that my dream be brought to pass."

CHAPTER V

THE DEATH OF ORPHEUS

ALONG the slope of Mount Kaoukaion the oak forests moaned beneath the fury of the storm; the thunder growled again and again on the bare rocks, causing the very foundations of the Temple of Jupiter to quake. The priests of Zeus had assembled in a vaulted crypt of the sanctuary, where they formed a semicircle, seated on their bronze chairs. Orpheus stood in their midst, like a prisoner at the bar. He was paler than usual, though a flame of light shone from his tranquil eyes.

The oldest of the priests then spoke in the sober accents of a judge.

"Orpheus, thou who art called Apollo's son, we have appointed thee pontiff and king, and given thee the mystic sceptre of the sons of God; by priestly and royal act, thou reignest over Thrace. In this country thou hast restored the temples of Jupiter and Apollo, and caused the divine sun of Dionysos to shine out on the night of mystery. Still, art thou well aware of what threatens us?

Thou, who knowest awful secrets, who, more than once, hast forecast the future, and spoken from afar to thy disciples, appearing to them in dreams, yet knowest not what is happening all around thee. In thine absence the wild Bacchantes and cursed priestesses have assembled in the vale of Hecate. Under the leadership of Aglaonice, the Thessalian sorceress, they have persuaded the chiefs on the banks of the Ebro to restore the worship of black Hecate, and are now threatening to destroy the temples of the male Gods and all the altars of the Most High. Roused by their ardent appeals, and led on by their seditious torches, a thousand Thracian warriors are now encamped at the foot of this mountain. To-morrow they intend to storm the temple, spurred on by these women clad in panther skins and eager for men's blood. Aglaonice, high-priestess of dark Hecate, is at their head. She is the most terrible of magicians, as desperate and implacable as a Fury. Thou must know her; what hast thou to say?"

"I knew that all this was to come to pass," said Orpheus.

"Then wherefore hast thou effected nought in our defence? Aglaonice has sworn to slay us on our altars, before the living heaven we worship. What will become of this temple and its treasures,

what will become of thy science and of Zeus himself if thou abandonest thy post?"

"Am I not with you?" replied Orpheus gently.

"Thou art indeed with us, but thou hast come too late," said the old man. "Aglaonice is at the head of the Bacchantes, and the latter are leading on the Thracians. Wilt thou repulse them with Jupiter's bolt and Apollo's arrows? Wherefore didst thou not summon here such Thracian chiefs as were faithful to Zeus, to put down this revolt?"

"It is not by arms but by words that the Gods are defended. It is not the chiefs who are to be struck down, but rather the Bacchantes. Be not anxious, I will go alone. No profane person shall enter this place. To-morrow the reign of the bloodthirsty priestesses shall be at an end. Rest assured, ye who tremble before Hecate's horde, the celestial and solar Gods shall triumph. To thee, old man, who didst doubt me, I leave the pontiff's sceptre and the hierophant's crown."

"What wilt thou do?" asked the old man in terror.

"I am about to return to the Gods. . . . There I will meet you again. Farewell!"

Thereupon Orpheus quitted the hall, leaving the priests mute in their seats. In the temple he found the disciple of Delphi, whom he seized forcibly by the hand, saying:

"I am going to the camp of the Thracians, follow me!"

They journeyed together beneath the oaks; the tempest was now afar off, and stars shone amid the thick branches.

"The hour of death for me has now come," said Orpheus. "Others have understood, but thou hast loved me. Eros is the most ancient of the gods, the initiates say; he holds the key to all that is. Accordingly I have shown thee the innermost of all Mysteries, the Gods have spoken to thee, thou hast seen them! . . . And now, alone with thee, far from the sight of men, Orpheus at the hour of death must leave to his beloved disciple the key to his destiny, the immortal inheritance, the pure torch of his soul."

"Master! I am listening. I will obey thee!" said the disciple of Delphi.

"We must continue," said Orpheus, "along this descending footpath. Time is pressing. I wish to take my enemies by surprise. As thou followest, listen, engrave my words in thy memory, but keep them secret."

"They are being printed in letters of fire on my heart; the ages shall not efface them," was the reply.

"Thou knowest that the soul is the daughter of

heaven. Thou hast contemplated thy origin and end, and art beginning to remember. When the soul descends into the flesh, it continues, though feebly, to receive the influx from on high. It is through our mothers that this powerful breath reaches us first. The milk of their breasts nourishes our bodies, but our real being, distressed by the stifling prison of the body, is fed by their soul. My mother was a priestess of Apollo; my earliest recollection is that of a sacred wood, a solemn temple, and a woman bearing me in her arms, her soft silky hair enveloping me as with a warm garment. Terrestrial objects and human faces filled me with a feeling of frightful horror. But when my mother pressed me to her breast, her eyes met mine, filling me with a divine remembrance of heaven. This ray of light, however, perished in the sombre grey of earth. One day my mother disappeared; she was dead. Bereft of her look of love, and deprived of her caresses, I was terrified at my loneliness. Seeing blood flow during a sacrifice, I conceived a feeling of horror for the temple, and descended into the gloomy valleys below.

"The Bacchantes were amazed at my youthful form. At that time Aglaonice ruled over those fierce voluptuous women, and all, men and women

alike, dreaded her. A dark spirit of desire seemed to emanate from her person, filling one with fear. This Thessalian woman exercised a fatal attraction over all who came near her. By the arts of infernal Hecate she attracted youthful maidens to her haunted valley, instructing them in the rites of her cult. Aglaonice had cast her eyes on Eurydice. For this virgin she had conceived an evil desire, an unbridled, malignant passion. She wished to lead on this young girl to the cult of the Bacchantes, to subdue her, and, after blighting her youthful beauty, to hand her over to the infernal genii. Even now she had cast around Eurydice her seductive promises and mighty incantations.

"Attracted, myself, by a presentiment impossible to explain, to the vale of Hecate, I was one day making my way through the lofty grass of a meadow, filled with venomous plants. All around lay the horrible gloomy woods, haunted by the Bacchantes. Clouds of perfume came to me like the warm breath of desire. I perceived Eurydice slowly walking along in the direction of a cave, as though attracted by some invisible impulse. She did not see me. At times a faint peal of laughter, then again a strange sound of sighing, would proceed from the woods of the Bacchantes. Eurydice

quivered and stopped, uncertain whether to continue or not; then she resumed her walk, impelled by some indescribable magic power. Her golden locks sported over her white shoulders, and a look of heaven-born enthusiasm appeared in her beautiful narcissus-coloured eyes as she approached the mouth of Hell. Seeing the light in her eyes, I now exclaimed, as I took her by the hand: 'Eurydice! Where art thou going?' As though awakening from a dream, she uttered a cry at once of terror and deliverance, and fell on my breast. It was at this moment that divine Eros overpowered us, and, by a single look, Eurydice-Orpheus were united for ever.

"And yet Eurydice in her fright still clinging to me, pointed with terrified gesture to the grotto. Drawing near, I saw a woman in a sitting attitude. It was Aglaonice. Close by was a small wax statue of Hecate, painted red, white, and black, holding a spinning-wheel on her knees. She was muttering some enchanted words as she turned the magic wheel, and her eyes, fixed on empty space, seemed to be devouring her prey. I broke the wheel into pieces, and trampled the Hecate under foot, then, fixing a steady look on the enchantress, I exclaimed: 'By Jupiter! I command thee, under penalty of death, to think no more of Eurydice!

For I would have thee know that the sons of Apollo fear thee not.'

"Aglaonice, abashed and amazed, twisted about like a serpent beneath my threat and disappeared into her cavern, after casting on me a look of mortal hatred.

"I conducted Eurydice to the entrance of my temple. The virgins of the Ebro, crowned with hyacinth, chanted in unison: 'Hymen! Hymenaee!' all around us. And now I knew the meaning of happiness.

"The moon had only thrice completed her orb when a Bacchante, obedient to the will of the Thessalian, offered Eurydice a goblet of wine, which would give her, so she said, all knowledge of philtres and magic herbs. Eurydice was inquisitive, drank it, and fell to the ground like a log. A deadly poison was contained in the cup.

"When I saw the funeral pile consume Eurydice, when I beheld the tomb swallow up her ashes, and the final trace of her living form disappear, I exclaimed: 'Where is her soul?' I set out in the blackness of despair and wandered over the whole of Greece. I asked the priests of Samothrace to summon her back; I sought her in the bowels of the earth, at Cape Tenarus, but unavailingly. Finally, I reached the cave of Tro-

phonius. There, certain priests lead rash visitors through a narrow passage to the lakes of fire boiling and foaming in the bowels of the earth, showing them what is taking place there. On the way, as one proceeds, one enters into an ecstatic state, and second sight is given. Breathing is difficult, the voice is choked, and it is possible to speak only by signs. Some return when half the distance is traversed, the rest continue and perish from suffocation—the majority of such as return alive remain mad until death. After seeing what no mouth is permitted to repeat, I returned to the grotto and sank into a profound lethargy. During this death-like sleep Eurydice appeared before me. She was floating in a nimbus, pale as a lunar ray, and she said to me: 'For me thou hast braved the infernal regions, seeking me among the dead. Here I am at the call of thy voice; it is not the bosom of the earth I inhabit, but rather the region of Erebus, the cone of shade between earth and moon. Sorrowing like thyself, I continually whirl round and round in this limbo. If thou wilt deliver me, save Greece by giving her light. Then I, finding my wings once more, shall rise to the stars, and thou wilt find me again in the light of the Gods. Until then, I must move in a circle

of grief and trouble. . . .' Thrice I attempted to seize her, thrice she disappeared from my arms like a phantom. I heard nothing but a sound resembling a breaking chord, then a voice, gentle as a breath, sad as a farewell kiss, murmured: 'Orpheus!'

"I awoke. This name, given me by a soul, had changed my being, and I felt the sacred thrill of an immense desire and the power of a superhuman love enter me. Eurydice, living, would have afforded me the intoxication of happiness; Eurydice dead, caused me to find Truth. It is through Love that I have taken on myself the linen garb, consecrating myself to the great initiation and the ascetic life; through Love that I have penetrated the secrets of magic and sought divine knowledge; through Love that I have crossed the caverns of Samothrace, the wells of the Pyramids, and the tombs of Egypt. I have searched death to find life therein, and beyond life I have seen the souls and transparent spheres, the Ether of the Gods. Earth has opened for me her abysses, and heaven its gleaming temples. I have uprooted the science concealed beneath the mummies. The priests of Isis and of Osiris have delivered up their secrets to me. They had only these Gods, I had Eros! By him I spoke, sang

and conquered; by him I spelled out the word of Hermes, and that of Zoroaster; by him I pronounced the name of Jupiter and that of Apollo!

"And now has come the hour for the confirmation of my mission by death. Once more I must descend to hell, in order to mount to heaven. Listen, beloved child! Thou wilt bear my doctrine to the temple of Delphi, and my law to the tribunal of the Amphyctions. Dionysos is the sun of the initiates; Apollo will be the light of Greece; the Amphyctions the guardians of his justice."

The hierophant and his disciple had reached the bottom of the valley. Before them stretched a glade, mighty groves of sombre woods, tents, and men sleeping on the ground. In the depths of the forest might be seen dying embers and flickering torches. Orpheus walked calmly into the midst of the tired Thracians, who were sleeping off the effects of a nocturnal orgy. A sentinel, still awake, demanded his name.

"I am a messenger of Apollo; summon thy chiefs," replied Orpheus.

"A priest of the temple!" This cry, raised by the sentinel, spreads throughout the camp like an alarm signal. They arm themselves and call aloud to one another, swords glitter, and the chieftains in astonishment surround the pontiff.

"Who art thou? Wherefore hast thou come here?"

"I am an envoy from the temple. Renounce this struggle, all of you—kings, chieftains, and warriors of Thrace—against the sons of light; recognise the divinity of Jupiter and of Apollo. The Gods above are now addressing you through me. I come as a friend if you will listen to me, but as a judge if you refuse."

"Speak!" said the chieftains.

Standing in the shade of a mighty elm, Orpheus began. He spoke of the benefits the Gods bestow, of the charm of heavenly light, that pure life he had passed above with his initiate brothers beneath the eye of the great Ouranos, and which he wished to communicate to all men; he promised to abolish discord and strife, to cure the sick, to teach them those seeds which produce the finest fruits of the earth, and those still more precious seeds which produce the divine fruits of life: joy, love, and beauty. And, as he spoke, his grave though gentle voice quivered, like the strings of a lyre, ever piercing more deeply into the hearts of the wavering Thracians. From the depths of the woods, the Bacchantes, with torches in hand, had also come to gratify their curiosity, attracted by the music of a human voice. Scantily clad in panthers' skins,

they came to show their dark gleaming bosoms and superb forms. By the light of the nocturnal torches their eyes could be seen shining with cruel lascivious gleam. Gradually lulled to a state of quiet and peace by the voice of Orpheus, they formed a group around him, or sat at his feet like tamed beasts. Some, overcome by remorse, fixed their eyes on the ground, whilst the rest listened in ravished ecstasy. The Thracians, moved by the sight, murmured to one another : "This is a God speaking to us. It is Apollo himself, charming the Bacchantes!"

All this while, Aglaonice, who had come from the deepest recesses of the forest, was keeping secret watch. The high-priestess of Hecate, seeing the motionless Thracians and the Bacchantes enchained by a magic more powerful than her own, was conscious of the triumph of heaven over hell, and, as she listened to the divine seducer, felt her accursed power fade away into the darkness from which it had sprung. With a cry of rage she flung herself in front of Orpheus.

"A God, you say? I tell you, this is Orpheus, a man like yourselves, a sorcerer who is deceiving you, a tyrant usurping your crowns. A God, you say? Apollo's son? He? The priest? The haughty pontiff? Fling yourselves upon him!

If he be God, let him defend himself . . . and if I lie, may I be torn to pieces!"

Aglaonice was followed by a few chieftains whom she had inflamed with hatred and excited by her devilish spells. They threw themselves upon the hierophant. With a loud cry Orpheus fell, pierced by their swords. Holding out his hands to his disciple, he said:

"I die, but the Gods live for ever!"

Thus speaking, he gave up the ghost. Leaning over his corpse, the sorceress of Thessaly, whose countenance now resembled that of Tisiphone, was awaiting the prophet's last breath with savage joy, and preparing to draw an oracle from her victim. What was her dismay, however, to see this corpse-like head return to life beneath the flickering light of the torch. A faint colour entered into the dead man's face, his eyes once more opened wide, and a gentle though terrible look was fixed upon her . . . whilst a strange voice . . . the voice of Orpheus . . . once more came from those trembling lips, distinctly uttering the melodious and avenging syllables:

"Eurydice!"

Before this look and voice the priestess stepped back in terror, exclaiming:

"He is not dead! They will follow me for-ever! Orpheus! Eurydice!"

Aglaonice then took to flight as though a hundred Furies were following her, lash in hand. The dismayed Bacchantes, and the Thracians, overwhelmed with horror at the crime they had committed, fled into the black night, shrieking aloud in their distress.

The disciple was left alone by the body of his master. A sinister ray from Hecate lit up at the same time the bleeding linen and the pale face of the mighty initiate, whilst from the very valleys and rivers, from forest and mountain, there seemed to proceed a doleful strain as though issuing from one immense lyre.

The body of Orpheus was burned by the priests, and his ashes borne away to a distant sanctuary of Apollo, where they were venerated with the reverence that had been given to the God himself. None of the rebels dared mount to the temple of Kaoukaion. The tradition of Orpheus, his science and mysteries, were there perpetuated and spread throughout all the temples of Jupiter and Apollo. The Greek poets said that Apollo had become jealous of Orpheus because the latter was invoked more frequently than himself. The truth is, that whilst the poets sang of Apollo, the great initiates invoked the soul of Orpheus, the deity of salvation and of divination.

At a later date the Thracians, converted to the religion of Orpheus, related that he had descended into hell to seek the soul of his spouse, and that the Bacchantes, jealous of his eternal love, had torn him to pieces, but that his head, though flung into the Ebro, and carried off by the stormy waves of the river, still uttered the plaintive moan: "Eurydice! Eurydice!"

Thus the Thracians proclaimed as a prophet the one they had killed as a criminal, who had converted them by his death. Thus also the Orphic word mysteriously filtered into the veins of Greece, through the secret paths of initiation and of the sanctuaries. Just as, within the temple, a chorus of initiates became attuned to the sounds of an invisible lyre, so also the Gods became attuned to his voice . . . and the soul of Orpheus became the soul of Greece.

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